Smithsonian

August 1992

Leafy sea dragon confounds our ideas about fish (p. 56)

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August 1992

Smithsonian

Volume 23, Number 5

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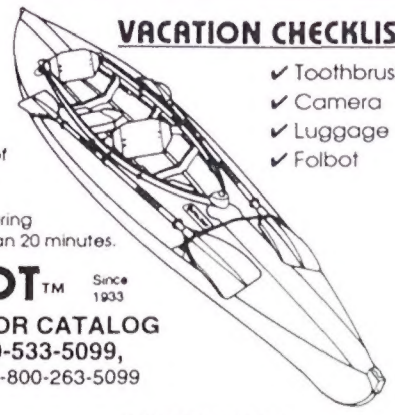

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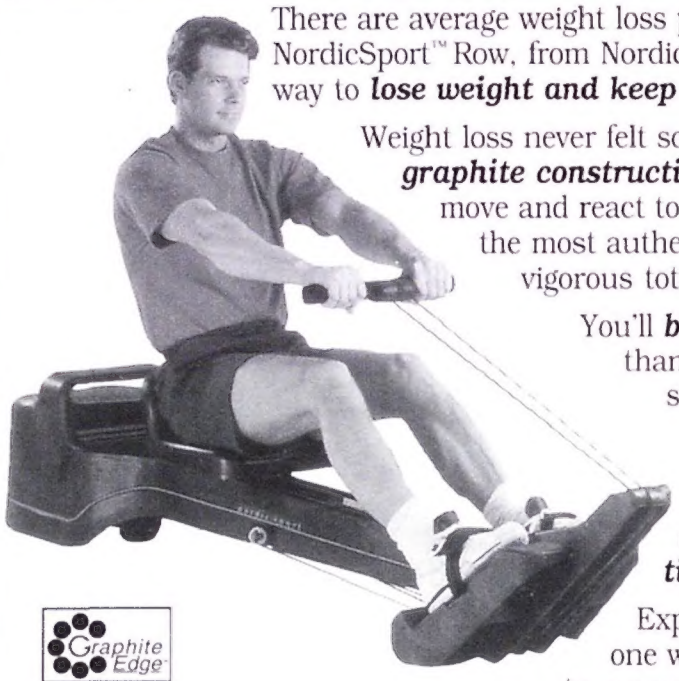

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Smithsonian horizons

Minute, seemingly random shifts in a series of events may set off results that move in quite different directions

Particularly in an election year, surveys of public opinion assume a special prominence. Nonpartisan news organizations as well as campaign strategists depend on them to anticipate the ballot box. But the intense demand for their use invites a closer look at their limitations, and that in turn provokes some reflections on predictability in human affairs.

We should not think of surveys as merely allowing us to take the pulse of public preferences on particular candidates or issues. Their greater utility is in tracking multiple, interrelated behavioral as well as attitudinal changes across time, and in helping us to separate the incidence and effects of these changes by income, age, and ethnic or other categories. Whether by telephone or on someone's doorstep, the eliciting of responses is in the end a human interaction. Formal interview protocols take great pains to maintain a neutral stance. But they are unavoidably subject to evasions, misinterpretations, and conscious or unconscious efforts on the part of respondents either to avoid deviating from what they regard as social norms or merely to find common ground for a more natural dialogue with their questioners.

These matters are well aired in a symposium with the wonderful title *Questions about Questions*, published by the Russell Sage Foundation. One conclusion: "it is futile to search for truly neutral questions. They don't exist." Other familiar problems include "memory decay" and the "telescoping" of past events. Nor have surveys yet been refined to the point where they are of more than limited assistance in ranking the comparative strength of public views. And they provide a still weaker basis for forecasting future behavior.

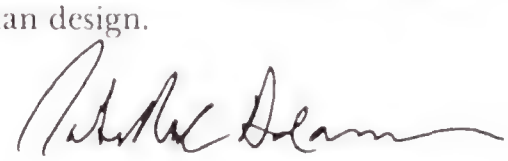
In this last respect surveys share the general limitations of the social sciences. The diverse disciplines have spun off ideas, practitioners and applications into virtually every aspect of our lives. But where the future is concerned, none succeed in moving very far beyond what are, in effect, alternative forms of marginal analysis. That can sustain short-term predictions of considerable accuracy. For larger, more discontinuous changes and longer spans of time, however, the question remains open as to whether any science that chooses to focus on the collective behavior of humankind can meet the commonly invoked criterion of predictability.

The coming election will take place in the long shadow of recent events in Los Angeles. That is a forcible reminder of the limited extent and accuracy of our predictive powers. There was no lack of earlier reports attesting to fundamental, unsolved—in fact, deepening—economic and social stresses in American urban life, and of a widespread sense of alienation from the political process. Yet there were few if any serious suggestions that an explosion was imminent.

Riots, to be sure, have a peculiarly unpredictable character of their own. But violence cannot be isolated from the main currents of political, social and economic life, much as we might like to do so. Not infrequently, as in this country in the 1960s, it punctuates the processes of change and searches for alternatives in society, all part of a complex interplay whose outcome becomes correspondingly more tension-ridden and indeterminate.

A lively new journal, *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science* (Indiana University Press), has recently made its appearance. One of its first subjects was the question of the predictability of revolutions. No social science discipline—and one can throw in most successful revolutionaries and the great majority of journalists and intelligence organizations for good measure—turns out to have had much to brag about by way of clairvoyance. Retrospectively "necessary" conditions often get cited, but which were "sufficient"? Nikki R. Keddie, the editor, attacks the "fallacy shared by many" that "big results . . . must have discoverably big causes." Minute, seemingly chaotic or random shifts in a sequence of events can trigger outcomes that cascade in entirely different directions. To the extent that this is so, indeterminacy is unavoidable.

But then there is W. R. Connor, writing not long ago in the *American Scholar* on the collapse of the Soviet Union, in an article entitled "Why Were We Surprised?" He suggests that the failing is in part our own. We have tended to confine ourselves to a narrow range of "hard," more or less measurable factors, and to exclude "the passions—the appeal of ethnic loyalty and nationalism, the demands for freedom of religious practice and cultural expression, and the feeling that the regime had simply lost its moral legitimacy." Here as well as there, this may leave almost all analysts inattentive to the role in provoking change of "soft" expressions of protest in literature and the arts, undertaken by groups who seemingly can place their hands on no immediate levers of power. But the only larger lesson may be that, as Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson insisted long ago, history should be recognized as the outcome of human action and not of human design.



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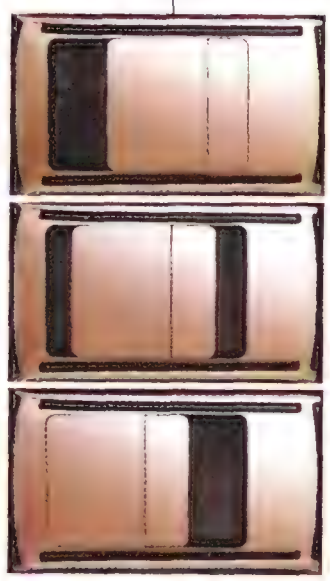

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Letters to the Editor

Jimmy Doolittle

Dear Sir: Philip Earl, curator of the Nevada Historical Society, wrote in the *Reno Gazette-Journal* that as a 19-year-old, Jimmy Doolittle, honored in your June issue, spent a summer as a maintenance mechanic at the Comstock Lode during a vacation from the University of California.

In a terrible accident on August 3, 1917, a cage with two miners aboard dropped 400 feet. Someone needed to go down to check on them. According to Earl, "Doolittle volunteered . . . and a mine foreman tied a rope around his waist. Four men lowered away as he descended into the black, yawning chasm . . . the carbide lamp on his cap . . . flickered out for lack of oxygen a hundred feet down. . . . One of the men grabbed a hose and put a stream of water down the shaft. This started some circulation and caused a downdraft which provided the young miner with enough air to continue his quest. Reaching the men, he felt for their pulses, but there were none. . . ."

Those who earned their livings in the mines took a dim view of the college kids who showed up each summer, but Jimmy "received the plaudits of his fellow miners for his daring descent down Union shaft. . . ."

Carolyn Beaupre
Virginia City, Nevada

Dear Sir: I have just witnessed a moving, tearful, joyous 50th reunion of the 17th Bombardment Group's bomber crews that formed the nucleus of Doolittle's Raiders. The 17th's former base is now the Columbia Metropolitan Airport, with a plaque commemorating their historic raid. And one of its buildings is the "Jimmy Doolittle Flight Facility."

Henry F. Watts sr.
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Sir: Your article brought back memories of my contact with Jimmy Doolittle from 1936 to 1939. He was in charge of aviation sales for Shell Oil Mid Continent Division in St. Louis. Working my way through college as a chemical engineering major, I was employed by Shell to test its paint.

As I had a chauffeur's license, I frequently picked up Mr. Doolittle at Lambert Field. He always sat in the front seat, and we had many interesting conversations. On one occasion, he left the logbook of his "Clipped Wing Bumblebee" in the car; I took it up to his office, and we continued our conversation. He invited me to fly with him to the Minneapolis-St. Paul dedication of Wold-Chamberlain Airfield. I reluctantly declined, having some special tests running in the paint laboratory, and have regretted being unable to go, ever since.

Contact with him was an inspiration, for he is without question the finest man I have ever known throughout my 50-plus years as technical director with various paint manufacturing companies.

Martin A. Trenkle
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Dear Sir: It is true that Captain York and his crew "were held prisoner, almost incommunicado, by the Russians" in the early part of their stay in the USSR, but it appears to have eased a great deal after June 1942.

The Soviet Union was not at war with Japan, so all American servicemen involved in an attack on Japan who entered the USSR were considered internees. They became involved in a complex charade designed to get them out of the USSR without antagonizing the Japanese government. Over time, York and his crew were interned at several different locations. In June and September of 1942, they were visited by U.S. personnel from the American Embassy, who found them unguarded, with local female house help, and with one Soviet military man on the premises.

In March 1943, Soviet authorities granted the crew's request for a move to a warmer climate and a chance to work. In Ashkhabad, they began work in a local factory. There was an evening head count but relative freedom to move around. York and his crew es-

caped into Iran on May 27 of that year, reportedly with the assistance of one Russian and one Persian smuggler.
Conrad H. Eadon
Huntsville, Alabama

Sports origins

Dear Sir: Charles VIII was not the only French king whose death was due to the national mania for tennis. On the afternoon of June 5, 1316, Louis X (*Le Hutin*, "The Stubborn") died in direct consequence of playing the game. Overheated, he left the sunny court of Chateau de Vincennes, rushed to a damp cellar to quench his thirst with iced wine, fainted dead away and died without regaining consciousness.
Adrian G. Krudy, M.D.
Chagrin Falls, Ohio

Cincinnati's Union Terminal

Dear Sir: When I was an AP reporter, the terminal gave me a story. A boa constrictor being shipped to a Northern zoo got loose in a Railway Express car one winter's day. All hands exited the car, which was uncoupled, and the train went on. The terminal called Cincinnati zookeeper Sol Stephan, who arrived with a gunnysack. Platform wags made odds whether Sol would come out with the snake or the snake with Sol.

Sol won, announcing: "He was just cold. He was hugging a steam pipe. He didn't want no trouble with anybody."
John Frye
Hampton, Virginia

Dear Sir: During the 1950s I lived in Cincinnati and am pleased to find that a use has finally been found for the magnificent Union Station. I often thought it should be used as a stage for opera, in my day performed at the Cincinnati Zoo. I remember *Madame Butterfly*, one Fourth of July. A young Japanese soprano who had the part of Cho-Cho-San was trying bravely to sing the lovely *Un bel dí* despite an idiot in the audience who kept throwing firecrackers at her. That was even worse than the lion, who tended to roar when certain passages displeased him.
Joe Eastman
La Jara, Colorado

Dear Sir: From 1958 to 1963 I attended the University of Cincinnati. On a summer Sunday afternoon a classmate—a native Cincinnatian acting as tour guide—showed me a phenomenon produced by Union Terminal's massive, vaulted architecture. At either end of the awesome entrance archway was a drinking fountain. A mere whisper into the basin of one fountain enabled one's words to be clearly heard at the other, some 50 yards away.
William McDaniel
Seattle

Orienteering

Dear Sir: During World War II, at the Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, our Terrain Intelligence class did a similar, but more difficult and complex, exercise. We were loaded into two-and-a-half-ton trucks, then the tarp on the back was lowered and secured. We'd be driven 6 to 12 miles into the countryside and dropped off blind in teams of three, at night. With a map in a foreign language and only the rendezvous point marked—five to eight miles away—we had to orient ourselves, usually on a moonless night. Then we would proceed around natural obstacles to meet the trucks.

It was great fun in the cool spring air, and we became very good at finding our way. Several times we beat the trucks to the rendezvous. By comparing the dim outlines of the hills with contour lines on the map, then checking a few crossroads and a stream or other landmark, we could quickly orient ourselves.

If you were not at the rendezvous point by midnight, you had to find your own way back to camp. Only a few teams ever straggled in around dawn; most of us were back and asleep before the deadline.
Leonard J. Nevis
San Diego

Phenomena, comment and notes

Dear Sir: For the past several years we have allowed the back third of our three-quarter-acre lot to go natural. Between the sloped land and the meandering, charming brook, the thought of landscaping or even manicuring was overwhelming.

At last, justification! It's wonderful to know we are *not* lazy! We're returning the land to a natural ecosystem and doing our part to preserve some natural habitat in our little corner of New England.
Sue Banks
Windsor, Connecticut

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Around the Mall and beyond

To a person brought up on early Tarzan movies, this scenario was bizarre. In my mind, Jane (Maureen O'Sullivan) was screaming to Tarzan (Johnny Weissmuller) that the great rhino was about to charge, while Boy (Johnny Sheffield) clung to her sketchy miniskirt, and Cheetah the chimp bounced up and down, chattering frantically. Yet there I was, stroking the velvety ears of a white rhinoceros while it sighed gustily with pleasure and leaned into me—all three and a half tons of it.

"Once you start doing that, he'll want you to keep on forever," said Nick Davis, a program officer at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center and one of the study leaders for this Smithsonian tour. "Here, peel this and give him a few sections."

He tossed me an orange, and I went to work on it, tearing off the rind, stripping away the membranes. I separated a clump of sections and held them out to my new friend. He sniffed massively, then sucked my entire hand inexorably into his great, wet maw. I had been told that African rhinos lack incisors and now found that bit of lore gratifyingly true. But believe me, a white rhino's got great lips. It took quite a tug to wrench my hand free after relinquishing the orange to the massive molars of this living vacuum cleaner.

His name is Mac. In a neighboring stall is Ollie, less than 5 years old and acting like a kid. He thrusts himself at you for more petting, ramming his tandem horns, the front one long and mean, the rear one stubby and tough, against the fence rail in this big, clean barn. Nick said Ollie sometimes gets his forefeet on the lower rail as if to climb right over. That's not encouraged.

An adult male rhino may suddenly mark his territory with urine. "He sprays backward about 15 feet," warned Nick, "and if he gets any on one of you ladies, you're his for life."

The ladies took that with equanimity, for they were Smithsonian National Associates, knowledgeable, well traveled, widely experienced in the works of nature and the ways of tour guides. They were on the "Texas African Safari" at Fossil Rim, 75 miles southwest of Dallas, where animals are collected not merely for pleasure but because many are endangered and threatened. Besides participating in the "Species Survival Plan," a computerized collection of genetic information that zoos and other institutions share for the purpose of breeding, the Center also collaborates with major universities on various reproductive, behavioral and physiological studies. The place is a private, for-profit venture but has many similarities to our Smithsonian Conservation Research Center at Front Royal, Virginia.

The Texas establishment is nearly as big—close to 3,000 acres—and also like Front Royal, gives animals broad acreage to roam. As at Front Royal, birthrates of endangered species here have been cheering. But there are many visible differences between the two places.

Front Royal is a beautifully wild patch of Blue Ridge Mountains. Much of its land is steep, heavily wooded and unsuitable for grazing by the ungulates who roam its huge paddocks. Fossil Rim lies on gentle rolling prairie, interrupted by a large, steep-walled mesa. The land is spotted with clumps of live oak, post oak, juniper and other regional trees. Texas bluebonnet paints the broad meadows in season. There's plenty of pasturage for more than 30 species of endangered, threatened and exotic animals, and they add up to about a thousand head. The ready visi-

Texas captive-breeding facility has eight of the highly endangered white rhino.

bility of Fossil Rim's resident creatures indicates the other great difference: our establishment is closed to the public; Fossil Rim welcomes paying visitors.

Many people simply drive in, pay a small entrance fee and take a 9.5-mile drive—speed limit 16 miles per hour—on a carefully marked, paved, one-way route. They'll see groups of my rhino friends in their 12-acre paddocks. They'll spot occasional zebras and giraffes. Ostriches are apt to wander over to their cars to get some nibbles—protein-rich alfalfa pellets sold by the Center. They may even glimpse a cheetah. And with the help of free tape recordings and rented binoculars, they'll be able to identify enough African and Asian antelope and gazelles to spin their heads.

Drive-through visitors are warned not to leave their cars. These are wild animals and, if you walk toward them, can react "any old whichaway," as folks say down here. It takes some four hours to drive through. At a halfway point there are restrooms, restaurant, "nature store," "petting pasture," a chance to walk a nature trail and other delights. Those who have reserved a horse can mount up here for a ride.

Our Smithsonian group had signed up for Fossil Rim's in-depth visit, booking in at the Foothills Safari Camp. Devotees of nature who opt for this experience must forget cars and ready communication with office or stock market. They're driven deep into the heart of the complex where, beside a watering hole, stands an elegantly rustic pavilion, a modern kitchen aromatic with gourmet cooking, and seven "tents" that deserve quotation marks because they're exactly the kind of dwelling you wish for when you're stuck for a few nights in a no-quotation-marks tent.

After temporarily enlisting in the Smithsonian group, I was shown to a "tent." From the outside it had the appropriate look of khaki-colored canvas. But that's only a covering, neatly stretched over wallboard. Each structure is insulated to maintain the temperature that its two guests select on their own ther-

mostat. Each has a ceiling fan, sliding windows and a bathroom with a shower!

Here sleep 12 guests and two staff members. Though the camp area is guarded from wandering animals by a solar-powered electric fence, the watering hole draws birds and animals at dawn and dusk as surely as it would if it were in the Serengeti. From the tents or from the broad porch of the pavilion, our people watched them come to drink, and listened for the nightly howling of a handful of red wolves (only a few remain in the world) in the Intensive Management Area.

The Smithsonian group had signed on for four nights. Not wishing to spoil myself, I joined them for only one full day. It turned out to be cold and rainy—my usual luck—but nonetheless an extraordinary day, rich with close encounters. Here, gleaned from my notes, is my report: Arrive predawn. Park inside gate. Bumpy van ride to safari camp. Pavilion smells of fresh coffee. Sleepy tour members drift in from tents. Shamefully rich breakfast. Set out on "game drive." Beaters whacking underbrush to scare animals within range of bwana's rifle? No way. It means driving through game with naturalist in charge.

A herd of Grant's zebras (world population: stable) gathers round a Texas family's Chevy at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center.

Open safari vehicles usually used. Not today. Two Land Rovers instead. Rumble past blackbucks. Males guard territories. Stand in middle. Does and youngsters goof off behind one buck's back. Other males sneak in among does. Fights erupt—lock horns and shove, hours on end. Blackbucks native to

India and Pakistan. Texas has more than the two countries combined.

From northern Africa: meet scimitar-horned oryx (extinct in wild) and addax (barely hanging on). Addax horns shaped like a lyre. It needs less water than a camel, says Nick, now driving.

From Sudan: dama gazelle, Grant's gazelle, both brown-and-white. From farther south: elands, wildebeest, greater kudus—almost moose-size. From South Africa: gemsbok with horns reaching up to four feet; blesbok, coming back after near wipeout; springbok, small, bounces stiff-legged, high in air to confuse predators. Enough species for a Sunday crossword.

Thump over wet washboard; splash through potholes. Despite name, African waterbucks coop up in shelters to keep dry. They're big and dark with bright white ring around their rumps—target for young to follow. "Predators can follow it too," says Nick, "but not unless they're very hungry. Waterbucks secrete a musky substance that predators just hate."

Axis deer (India): small, feisty, often drive off larger species. "One of our males used to curl his lip and grind his teeth at a big European red deer," we're told. "If that didn't work, he would turn his head so that his antlers were aimed at the other's eyes."

And so it went, past Grévy's zebras, up the hill past the shy aoudads—Moroccan sheep resembling bighorns—to the cheetahs, patrolling their big, grassy, leafy enclosure. Ample room and stimulation from the nearby presence of so many prey animals have led to success in cheetah breeding. Five cats in 1986 became 55 in six years—many of which are on "breeding loan." Though infant mortality and infectious disease still threaten, Fossil Rim has an extraordinary record of cheetah births when most refuse to breed at all in captivity.

Fossil Rim's animal care coordinator, Kelley Snodgrass, briefed us further on cheetah breeding at lunch. He had recently attended a national cheetah workshop at Front Royal and pointed out that many breeding zoos keep in contact with work going on at our National Zoo. They especially benefit from the NOAHS (New Opportunities in Animal Health Sciences) mobile lab developed there (*Around the Mall*, October 1990), which uses recent advances in biotechnology to help save endangered species.

It was in the afternoon that we visited the paddocks and barn complex where my cherished notion of a rhino's ferocity vanished with my hand into that slobbering mouth. Among the bits of information that flew around us like flakes in a blizzard was the fact that the "white rhino" isn't white. The name is a corruption of the Afrikaans "weit" (wide), referring to its lips, wide instead of prehensile as they are in a black rhino, which isn't black, but got its name because it's different from white. Clear?

Speaking of names, Fossil Rim started as a private wildlife "ranch," then was bought by a pair of crusading "greenies," Jim Jackson, builder of yachts, and his wife, Christine Jurzykowski, ex-producer of films. They formed today's center, a conservation station offering "ecotours." I thought instantly of another term for the place: "an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge . . ."

But I believe that's been used.

Edwards Park

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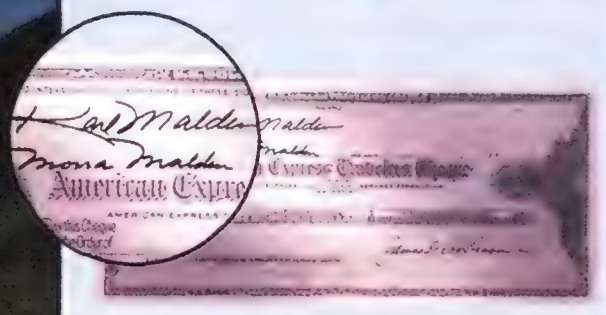

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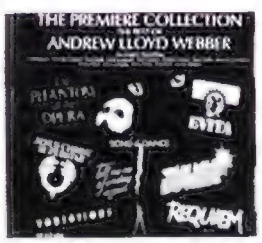

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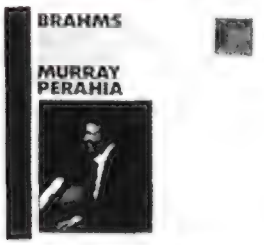

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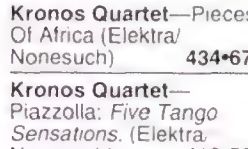

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Phenomena, comment and notes

Only when the snow melts in spring do high-plains ranchers know how many posts and how much barbed wire they need to replace; this fence did well.

Montana ranchers still "make fence," but the march of the condos means wire will go the way of open range

"A hundred years ago there weren't any fences out here."

Indeed. As I started out with my father-in-law one bright Montana morning, it was easy to believe that the works of Man had not lain long on this land. To the south, green and snowcapped against the blue sky, rose the Beartooth Range of the Rockies. To the north and east the sagebrush-covered plains of eastern Montana fell away, their undulations hiding the trees that lined the distant Yellowstone River. In this expanse of emptiness, the human presence is easy to overlook. A small town here, a road there, hardly makes a dent. And yet, if you look closely, you can see little lines running across the countryside—the barbed wire fences that separate one spread from another. That morning we were starting the annual chore of repairing the damage winter had done to our own fences. In the local language, we were going out to "make fence."

Robert Frost, speaking of the solid stone fences and winters of New England, observed: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." How much more vulnerable are the thin metal wires that subdivide the high plains. Barbed wire isn't nearly the deterrent to movement that most people think. An animal with thick fur, or one angry enough to ignore some temporary pain, can simply walk through a fence. Bulls do it all the time, as do buffalo. In our area, the construction of ski condominiums in a neighboring valley has driven the local elk herd out of its normal winter pasture. They used to wreak havoc with some of our fences until we took discretion to be the better part of valor and rented the affected pastures to the state as an elk refuge.

But this year the culprit was a wet April snow that piled ten-foot drifts over the fenceline, crushing down wire and fencepost alike. Like most people who live on the high plains, Montana ranchers don't look for volcanic eruptions or Kuwaiti oil fires to blame these events on—the history of the area is too full of killing blizzards and freak weather for one more storm to make much of a difference. They just wait until it blows over and then go out and make enough repairs to get by until the next one comes along.

We were lucky today—the broken fence was along the highway. Sometimes just getting to the place you want to work can be a chore, involving travel by pickup, tractor, horse or, occasionally, foot. And while the basic tools of the fencemender's trade aren't all that heavy, by the time you've walked up a steep mountainside carrying a few posts and a roll of wire, you acquire a visceral respect for Newton's law of gravitation.

Fixing a fence may sound like a simple thing to do, but it turns out to be one of those traditional crafts that require a fair amount of thought and experience. In fact, you can think of every fence as a one-of-a-kind artifact, showing the personality of its makers and its history of mending. Each situation you encounter, each broken strand or uprooted fencepost, is different from any other and has to be dealt with in its own way. For example, that morning I came across a place where a fencepost had rotted through. Instead of replacing it, someone had just piled rocks around the base to keep it upright for a while. Next time it breaks, I'll have to decide whether to add a few more rocks as a stopgap or put in a new post. The decision will depend on a lot of things—how many posts we have left, for example, and the time of day and my level of fatigue. In the old days, people sometimes went to great lengths to keep from replacing posts. When one would rot through, the rancher would just detach it from the wire, turn it upside down, and double its useful life. And when all else fails, the rotted wood, no longer anchored in the ground, is just left hanging between the wires to keep the strands separated.

Once you've gotten the posts fixed to your satisfaction, you have to turn your

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GETS THINGS DONE
ONE IN A SERIES

Christina Rael is 74, still runs a few head of cattle in Catron County, New Mexico, and right now she's thinking of getting rid of that old washboard of hers. Reason is she finally has a washing machine and the electricity to run it. As to how she got the electricity, that's quite a story, starting back in the Great Depression. But living in the past is not what interests Christina Rael. She's among the millions of consumers who own rural electric co-ops. Their minds are on the future, because they've learned the way hard work, resourcefulness, and, yes, cooperation make life better for everyone.

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attention to the wire. Like the posts, the wires on an old fence can be a motley collection, representing many different repairs done over many different decades. The first thing is to see how much of the old wire is still usable—no point in using new wire if the old will do. You then splice a new length of wire onto one of the old strands and bring the other end over to where the old strand picks up again. Using a tool called a wire stretcher, which grips the two unattached ends and then pulls them together, you get the wire nice and tight all along the fencerow. With everything still taut, you wrap the end of the new wire to the old strand, walk along the row and tighten the staples that hold the wire to the post, and then take the stretcher off. The result: the old broken wire is now stitched together with a gleaming piece of new metal.

As a fence ages, it begins to reflect the accumulated craftsmanship and ingenuity of generations of ranchers, and acquire a character of its own. Here and there along each strand the lumpy marks of past splicings appear. Even the mute fenceposts have their stories to tell.

When the land was first divided, there was a good supply of old trees around, so they were split into rails, pie-shaped in cross section, before being put into the ground. On the fenceline we were working that day, for example, I saw a number of cedar posts that had been installed in 1932, when the road was first put through to Yellowstone National Park.

As time went by and timber became more scarce, the posts changed. First they were made from young trees a few inches across, then from metal stakes driven into the ground. Next time you're driving in the West, take a look at the fences you're passing. If unblemished wires run straight and proud between upright metal supports, you can bet the fence is no more than a few years old. If the wire is patched, sags here and there, and hangs from a variety of posts, you may be looking at one of the original fences put in during the great enclosures at the end of the 19th century. Even the wire changes from one place to another on old fences, and Western-history buffs have developed an entire cottage industry devoted to collections and studies of the different kinds (SMITHSONIAN, July 1991).

Working on a fence, then, gives you a very real sense of continuity with generations of the men and women whose character is stamped on each strand. As you drive a post or wrestle with an intractable stretch of wire under the hot Western sun, you have a sense that you are adding to a mosaic that began before you were born and will continue long after you're gone. And unlike other old-time artifacts—vintage cars, farm implements used as decoration, clothes used only at costume parties—the fence will always continue to carry out the humble task for which it was originally constructed.

Or will it? Up until a hundred years ago the high plains were largely unfenced. The land was first used by Indians to support their nomadic culture, then by white settlers as open range for livestock. After the early summer branding, the cattle were allowed to roam unfettered by fences until the fall roundup, when they were again sorted out. Even today, large parts of the West still operate under open-range

laws, and if you don't want your neighbor's livestock on your land, it's your responsibility to put up a fence.

But times changed, and fences began to spring up, subdividing the open range and controlling the movement of cattle. Part of the Old West disappeared, to live on only in legend. But the important part of the West—the part based on the family ranch—survived, and fences grew and prospered with it.

Now I know that most people, when they hear the word "rancher," think immediately of the likes of J. R. Ewing. In fact, most ranches are like the more familiar Midwestern family farms. The average income for a ranching family is less than $30,000 per year—hardly enough to keep ol' J. R. in champagne. Of course, the ranches themselves are big, typically running to thousands of acres, but the lack of rainfall makes them singularly unproductive. It may require more than ten acres to grow enough forage for a single steer, for example, so size and profitability don't necessarily go hand in hand.

The family ranch remains, at the end of the 20th century, a repository of those virtues we like to claim as being singularly American—independence, integrity, neighborliness and hard work. The sheer immensity of the land, the distance between human habitations, produces a kind of cooperative spirit completely lacking in more crowded locales. Other people are looked on as a possible source of help in a hostile environment, rather than as a possible source of trouble. Unwritten codes of conduct still survive in some places—for example, in our area it is understood that maintaining the fences separating ranches is a joint responsibility, with each rancher taking care of the half to his right as he faces the fence.

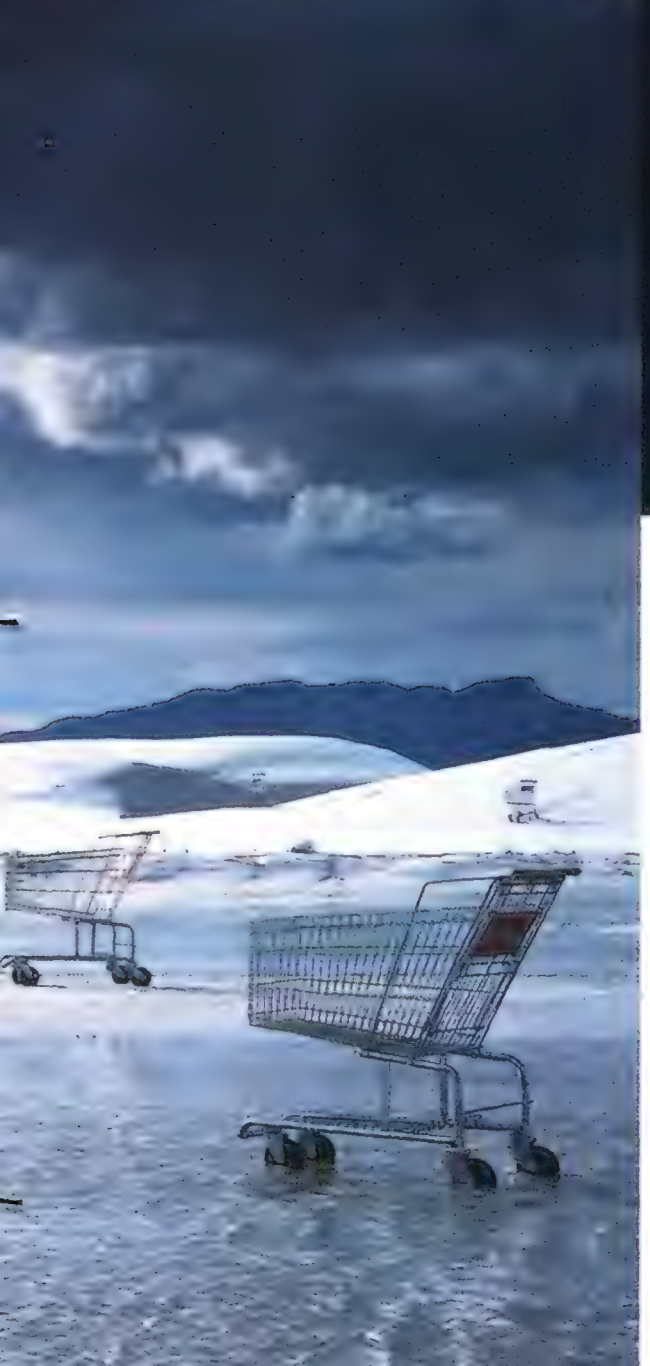
So, in addition to symbolizing individual craftsmanship, you could say that the old fences in the West symbolize a way of life as well. Unfortunately, it's a way of life under a great deal of pressure right now. From where I was working that morning, the threat to the family ranch took a very real and corporeal form. Looking down the valley, I could see the line of condominiums that marked the farthest advance of modern urban civilization into this ancient landscape. Each year, we hear about another ranch being sold off and subdivided, another piece of land transferred from the 19th to the 21st century.

When barbed wire appeared on the open range, it was part of a culture that was still largely in tune with nature. When the barbed wire is replaced by factory-produced "rustic" log fences surrounding houses that would fit perfectly in any suburb in the country, the change will be more drastic (and, I fear, more irreversible). So when I do my annual expedition these days my appreciation of continuity is tinged with the melancholy sense that someday soon the last repairs may be made and the fences will be pulled down to make way for more of those houses down there. It's not pleasant to contemplate the end of a valued way of life.

But enough: sometimes you can think too much. Today, *this* strand of wire is broken, *this* fencepost is awry. Time to get on with the job.

Hand me the pliers, will you?

James Trefil
Robinson Professor of Physics
George Mason University



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Eastern and Western cultures merge in attire of this couple celebrating New Year at the Bolsa Tet festival.

By Stanley Karnow

In Orange County's Little Saigon, Vietnamese try to bridge two worlds

He wears a stylish pair of shades and a snappy sport coat; for her, a traditional embroidered jacket.

Thousands of immigrants from Southeast Asia are now rebuilding their lives in Southern California, but the going is not always easy

"Americans go to bank for loan, Vietnamese go to friends," Gi is saying. "I ask this guy for a thousand, another for two thousand, soon I have eighteen thousand. We trust each other, so no interest. He know I do the same for him one day."

Nguyen Huu Gi, a slender and amiable man, is explaining how he was able to start the little computer store that he runs with his family in a part of California that, for his visitor, resonates with echoes of another time and another country.

When I left Vietnam after years of covering the war, I never expected to see Saigon again. But I am back there now, at least in spirit. For the Vietnamese refugees who have streamed into California since the Communists conquered their country in 1975 have created a facsimile Saigon in Orange County, an hour's drive south of Los Angeles. To commemorate its antecedents—and in hopes of diverting tourists from nearby Disneyland—the local authorities have formally recognized the area's character in a freeway sign: "Little Saigon."

Survivors with a need to cluster

Insecure on alien soil, newcomers have historically clung together during their early years in America. Irish congregated in Boston, Germans in Milwaukee, the Jews and Italians in New York City. But the Vietnamese feel an even stronger urge to cluster. Unlike immigrants, who uprooted themselves by choice, they are refugees from war, devastation and political repression, and many continue to be traumatized by their perilous escapes. They are also tormented by an almost obsessive nostalgia for a native land that, many fear, they may never see again. Though most have shown extraordinary resilience, others have failed to adjust fully to America, and their problems are straining their mental stability as well as their family ties. As a Vietnamese social worker explained to me, "We are survivors, grasping each other for support. A place like Little Saigon provides that support."

The U.S. Government, striving to avert a repetition of the massive Cuban impact on Miami, originally attempted to disperse the first Vietnamese arrivals around the country. The policy miscarried.

Seeking to be with their relatives and friends, and lured by a warm climate reminiscent of home, more than a quarter of the one million Vietnamese refugees who poured into America after 1975 eventually migrated to California. At least 70,000 settled in Orange County, making it the biggest concentration of Vietnamese outside Vietnam.

If Vietnam meets America in Little Saigon, it is also where the two cultures collide. Scanning the Orange County telephone directory, for example, I encounter

Photographs by Gerry Gropp

Buddha flanks entrance to shopping mall built by entrepreneur Frank Jao, who arrived here with $50.

pages of Nguyens and Phams, the Vietnamese parallels of Smith and Jones. But many have adopted such American first names as Harry and Pat. Those who have kept their Vietnamese names often reverse them in Western fashion, so that a friend of mine, formerly Tran Nghia, is now Nghia Tran. East and West blend in enterprises like the Eurasian Mortgage Company.

Little Saigon is devoted to commerce, as its prototype was before the Communists curbed capitalism. But while the refugees have transplanted their own brand of business in this foreign setting, they have embraced the most American of consumer institutions—the shopping center.

The towns of Garden Grove, Westminster and Santa Ana, which form the core of the Orange County Vietnamese community, bustle with malls like the Asian Village and the Le Loi Center, the latter named for a 15th-century Vietnamese emperor, and they rival one another in vitality. Westminster's business district is the area formally known as Little Saigon. There one afternoon, cruising down Bolsa Avenue, a main artery, I stop at the Asian Garden, an ornate two-story arcade whose curved tile roof and lacquered pillars were designed to evoke the Orient. At its entrance sits a mammoth Buddha flanked by the gods of prosperity, longevity and happiness, a quartet presumably convened to inspire confidence in its merchandise. Stepping inside, I am propelled into what the real Saigon might be today had America and its South Vietnamese clients won the war.

Blaring from audiocassette stores is a cacophony of music ranging from hard rock to syrupy sentimental, all in Vietnamese. Peering into one, I see tapes made in Vietnam, legal through an amendment to the U.S. embargo on trading with the former enemy. There are travel agencies that primarily ticket Vietnamese, who are increasingly returning to Vietnam on visits. "Homesickness," a Vietnamese editor told me, "is reaching epidemic proportions here."

Dried lizard and starfish flakes

The arcade abounds in jewelers, testimony to the Vietnamese propensity to convert savings into gems or gold rather than trust the banks. A pharmacy contains, instead of aspirin and cold pills, drawers of such esoteric items as ground antler, dried lizard, starfish flakes and assorted grades of ginseng, a prized restorative that can cost as much as $2,000 a pound. I browse through bookshops stocked with novels, political tracts and girlie magazines, all published locally in Vietnamese. As in old Saigon, there are custom tailors surrounded by bolts of cloth, and dressmakers prepared to run up *ao dais*, the flowing silk tunic-and-pants ensembles worn by Vietnamese women at cere-

Jao has played a key role in building 14 shopping centers in Orange County, including the Today Plaza in Westminster. Mall's decorative gate is guarded by a stone lion that symbolizes good fortune and prosperity.

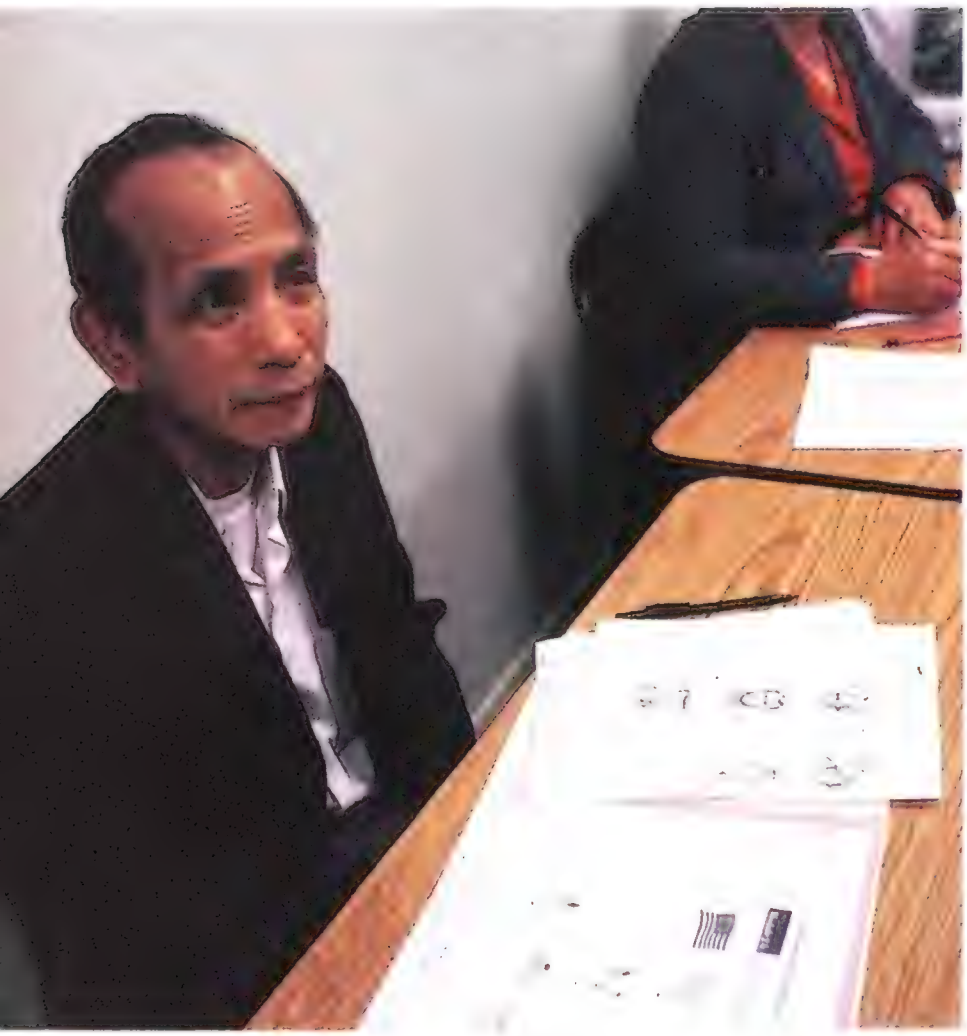
monies. Cafés are crowded with Vietnamese men chatting over glasses of café au lait, just as they did in the real Saigon, where conversation was a cottage industry. The malls are also information hubs, where refugees exchange news and gossip, mainly about Vietnam.

Eating, a Vietnamese addiction, accounts for Little Saigon's diversity of restaurants. They come in nearly every size, from holes in the wall to garish palaces adorned with dragons and colored lanterns. Reflecting Vietnam's regionalism, some serve robust southern dishes while others offer simpler northern fare. The most popular are bistros dedicated to *pho*, the national Vietnamese noodle soup, a melange of cabbage, parsley, coriander and soybean sprouts topped with shrimp, squid, beef, pork or chicken. At one I enter to sample a bowl, the waiter cannot understand English, and we negotiate in sign language, as I often did in Vietnam. A Vietnamese acquaintance who lives in Chicago remarked to me following a visit to Little Saigon: "After 15 years in America, it was the first time I spent a week without speaking a word of English."

A delight of old Saigon were street markets, with their mounds of fruit, vegetables, spices, herbs and meats. The equivalent in Orange County are American-style supermarkets, complete with carts and checkouts manned by brisk, bilingual sales personnel. Their lavish inventories make the Saigon markets of my memory seem bare by comparison.

I stroll into one whose vegetable bins overflow with vast varieties of Chinese cabbage, snow peas and sweet pea leaves, string beans and soybeans, tofu, bamboo shoots, white radishes, hot and sweet peppers, water chestnuts, fresh and dried mushrooms, garlic, ginger and other roots I cannot identify. The fruit counter is crammed with Asian pears, persimmons, mangoes, papayas, litchis and Malaysian durians, whose putrid smell belies their sweetness. There are shelves of bottled oils and sauces—sesame, soybean, oyster, shrimp paste and above all *nuoc mam*, a singular Vietnamese concoction made from fermented fish. Piled high in

Stanley Karnow, author of Vietnam: A History, *is at work on a book on the Asian experience in America. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1990.*



Intent immigrant attends class on American history and English; language study has high priority.

Two families of new arrivals get their bearings at a shelter while figuring out how to survive in America.

yet another section are sacks of rice from almost every land in Asia, whose distinctive textures can be discerned by connoisseurs.

The seafood department is an aquarium of giant tanks filled with live lobsters and crayfish, crabs, squid and baby octopuses, carp, catfish, bass, flounder, grouper and other species. There are dried jellyfish, smoked eels, preserved shark fins, crispy seaweed and sea cucumber—a gelatinous marine grub that reputedly possesses medicinal properties.

Unlike old Saigon, a raucous wartime tenderloin of bars and nightclubs, Orange County is quiet—except on Saturday nights, when the action can be found at such discos as the Ritz, where I am taken by friends.

The spacious hall is vintage Travolta as beams of light pierce clouds of dry-ice smoke. A Vietnamese combo called the Shotguns switches from waltzes to tangos to rock as Vietnamese couples of every age pack the floor—the women in black tights, designer jeans or frilly frocks, the men in blue denims, flashy suits or cowboy outfits. The star attraction is Lynda Trang Dai, a 24-year-old beauty billed as the "Vietnamese Madonna," who struts in a sequined bra and hot pants as she belts out rock tunes in Vietnamese. I later learn from a newspaper interview with her that she escaped from Saigon with her family in 1978, and started singing at a California high school. Her sexy image is just a pose, she says. "I don't smoke, I don't drink. I'm just your typical Vietnamese girl." But there are no "typical" Vietnamese refugees. Many have thrived, many have lagged behind—and many languish in poverty. According to Walter Barnes, a California refugee and immigration official, "There are some tremendous successes and tremendous failures. In the middle is a bunch of people trying to do their best."

Their backgrounds in Vietnam, coupled with when and how they fled, have shaped their lives in America.

The first wave to arrive in 1975 was largely composed of Saigon government officials and army officers, doctors, lawyers and businessmen, and employees of the U.S. mission in Vietnam. Almost half had college degrees, and most were more or less proficient in English. Many had studied in the United States and knew Americans who helped them to get settled. Though Vietnamese refugees faced racial hatred elsewhere—and do to this day—they were warmly welcomed as

Refugees Kieu Oanh Ha, Eddy Nguyen and Minh Tran are all honor students at Saddleback High School.

victims of Communism in Orange County, a conservative bastion. Most important, nearly all arrived with their families, a source of their strength.

Initially many were forced to take menial jobs, but they were motivated, diligent and enterprising. Eventually they prospered—so that, by the early '80s, their household income equaled the U.S. average.

Horatio Alger would have been proud of Frank Jao, one of the prime developers of Little Saigon. An ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, he is a soft-spoken bantamweight in his 40s, whose only displays of wealth are tailored suits and a Mercedes sedan. He tells me his story over dinner in a local French restaurant.

Saigon was booming during the late 1960s as the United States pumped billions into the war, and Jao found a solid job with a private American firm. Fleeing the Communists, he and his wife landed at Camp Pendleton, the U.S. Marine base in California, where some of the first refugees were greeted. Jao had only $50 in his pocket. He earned another fifty—his American debut as an entrepreneur—by selling his Vietnamese jacket to a souvenir hunter.

Jao started over as a door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman, but rejections depressed him. Going from one job to another, he began to study real estate, and earned his sales license at a propitious moment. Light industrial plants were moving into Orange County, and Jao was soon selling houses to their employees.

Observing that there were then only a few Asian stores in the area to serve the Vietnamese influx, Jao persuaded a Chinese friend to open a grocery in Westminster, arranged the deal and went on to others. To aid destitute relatives in Vietnam, the refugees mailed them articles that could be sold on the free market—a practice that still continues. The preferred articles were pharmaceutical products that fetched high prices in Saigon, and Jao induced Vietnamese druggists to set up outlets in Orange County. He formed investment syndicates and, borrowing heavily to finance the venture, completed his first shopping center by 1980. His firm, Bridgecreek Development, has since built 14 shopping centers. He has sometimes consulted a geomancer to be sure that the shopping centers are auspiciously situated, and once a year has firework displays—partly a publicity gimmick but also a time-honored Asian device to ward off evil spirits.

Dat-shun Ginseng and Tea Company in Asian Garden sells only herbal products, not Western medicines.

Food area of the Asian Garden arcade is a popular place for refugees to meet, eat, drink—and talk.

Apt to put their money into gold rather than banks, shoppers throng the Garden's jewelry trading center.

"I don't know anything about politics," Jao protests to me with an aw-shucks shrug. In fact, he is close to the local power elite, which assures him official favors. He contributes to the Republican Party, a force in Orange County, as well as such key groups as the fire and police departments. He was a principle force behind the legislation to give Westminster's business district its official designation, but he lost his battle against titling the area Little Saigon—a label, he tells me, that recalls "bad memories of the war."

The next surge of refugees gathered momentum during the late 1970s, bringing in a different breed of Vietnamese—peasants and fisherfolk fleeing poverty, young men evading conscription in Vietnam's new wars against China and in Cambodia, or Chinese expelled by the Communists as suspected surrogates of China. Escaping by sea, often aboard rickety, overcrowded craft, the boat people were lashed by savage storms or ran out of food and water, and many were robbed, raped, even murdered by pirates. Those who reached Thailand or Malaysia were frequently turned away or confined to refugee camps, sometimes for years. And those lucky enough to get to America arrived amid the severest inflation in a generation, followed by the worst recession in a half-century.

Many adapted through remarkable fortitude and hard work. One such was Nguyen Huu Gi, who had started his computer store with loans from his friends. When I visit him, his wife is at the counter, his teenage daughter is toting up accounts, and two of his sons, college students, are repairing a computer.

A former math teacher who remained in Vietnam for five years under the Communists, Gi fled for the sake of his children. "They come home from school singing Communist songs, but cannot add numbers," he recalls. "All Communists care about is politics, not science or math, just politics. So I decide to escape, even if my family die at sea."

Sailing into a storm for security

Gi and friends pooled their money, bought a small boat and secretly left Vietnam with 55 people aboard. Heading into stormy weather to elude pursuit, they made it to Singapore. Four months later, he landed in Houston with his wife and four children, sponsored by his brother, who had settled there earlier. There a new challenge awaited them. Unable to hold a job, Gi realized that he had to learn English and acquire a skill. He moved to California, which offers liberal social services, and his family lived on welfare while he studied English and computer science. A computer company later engaged him, and eventually he had saved $8,000. He opened his store in 1985, having proceeded in Vietnamese style. As he explains:

Out on the town, prosperous Vietnamese raise a toast with cognac at the pricey Ritz Club in Anaheim.

At clubs, bands and singers switch back and forth between rock and Vietnamese ballads, even the tango.

"Americans make big investment, hire manager, technicians. Vietnamese cannot afford that, but wife and children all work hard. At first I keep old job while wife and friend take care of store; later I quit to run business full time. Until last year we are here seven days a week, sometimes until 2 in the morning. Now we're doing OK, so we take Sunday off."

Not all Vietnamese families are so cohesive. Though they are purportedly models of harmony, many are frustrated by the pressures of America. Numbers of refugee couples brought their difficulties from Vietnam, where wartime tensions strained marriages, and the pace of America has aggravated their troubles. Divorce among them, while rare by American standards, is rising. Husbands reduced to menial jobs or welfare often lose status in their wives' eyes. Women have also discovered freedom in America. Many are working and, to their spouses' dismay, rejecting their traditional submissive role. Marriages are further threatened as Vietnamese women turn toward white American men, whom they assume to be rich and able to rescue them from hardship—and who are often charmed by their grace and beauty. As one Vietnamese tells me, "Not a week passes that an American doesn't flirt with my wife."

Meanwhile, parents preoccupied with earning a living often lack the time and energy to pay attention to their children. Or children who have adapted rapidly to America feel estranged from parents unable to adjust as quickly. Frequently kids who have become fluent in English no longer communicate easily with parents who are comfortable only in Vietnamese. "What we're seeing," a counselor at an Orange County school observed, "is the classic immigrant experience of families drifting apart because their members can't keep up with each other in a new society."

America is especially tough on the elderly. In Vietnam they were respected in accordance with Confucian tenets, and they could mingle with contemporaries in villages or urban districts. But many, particularly in California, suffer from what Dr. Ton That Niem, an

During a Tet festival at the Valley High School in Santa Ana, martial arts expert Fong Yen Phi prepares to demonstrate a Vietnamese style of Kung Fu, while traditional flag dancers provide vivid counterpoint.

Orange County psychiatrist, terms "adjustment disorder." Unable to drive, they cannot shop or visit friends, and they sit alone at home watching television in English, which they cannot understand. Their sons and daughters are too busy to see them regularly, while their Americanized grandchildren, who often cannot speak Vietnamese, frequently snub them. Many dream of returning to Vietnam—at least to die. Or, as they euphemistically put it, "I want to go back to retire."

Equally serious are the problems facing the political prisoners released by the Communists. The United States has agreed to take most of the estimated 200,000 originally detained if they want to come, and some 22,000, including families, have arrived during the past two years. The thousands more to come will badly need help.

Like the first wave of refugees, most are onetime professionals who, for one reason or another, failed to flee when the Communists took over. Many are skilled, but their age is against them. I talk with one who, still jittery after his ordeal, requests anonymity. Call him Linh.

A former South Vietnamese Air Force major trained in Illinois, he was aboard a helicopter poised to take off from Saigon as the Communists entered the city. Suddenly he jumped out of the chopper. "I couldn't leave my wife and four children behind," he recalls.

Ordered to report for "re-education," Linh complied—and spent seven years at hard labor in the jungle. He and his fellow prisoners were fed meager rations of cassava and rice, and many died of malnutrition or malaria. A political pariah after his release in 1982, he subsisted in Saigon as a private tutor until he could emigrate with his family.

Knowing America, he expected to adjust easily. But jobs were scarce even for Americans in their 50s, and before he was hired by a relief agency his family relied on welfare, which he considered humiliating. His wife is now a seamstress, and his children solder circuit boards in an electronics plant while studying English at night. Though they barely make ends meet, Linh hopes that his three sons and a daughter, ages 18 to 23, will shortly enter college. "I'm too old to start again," he says. "The future belongs to my children. That is why we're here."

Attractive nightclub singers were a feature of the real Saigon, and the tradition continues in the facsimile. Here, at the Ritz Club, Lynda Trang Dai—the "Vietnamese Madonna"—belts out a song.

Vietnamese refugee children are often depicted as whiz kids, and while the image is exaggerated, many are indeed overachievers. Like other Asians, who traditionally revere scholars, they value learning. They also see education as both the path to success and, consistent with their sense of filial piety, the way to bring esteem to their family.

One of the liveliest days I spend in Orange County is at Saddleback High School in Santa Ana. Though Vietnamese represent only about 15 percent of the student body of some 2,800, most of it Hispanic, they are invariably the valedictorians. At the 1992 commencement, 26 of the top 33 students were Vietnamese.

Sitting in on an advanced-placement English class, I am amazed by the verve of the students, most of them Vietnamese. Led by a bouncy teacher named Chris Lammers, they read aloud from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, analyzing the tragedy with eloquence and even digressing into a discussion of the Freudian Oedipus complex. Later I chat with Minh Le Tran and Kieu Oanh Nguyen Ha, both straight-A students who had fled from Vietnam with their families in the late '70s.

Minh, who hopes to become a businessman, speaks of his parents' aspirations for him. "They're really proud of me," he says. "So I have to keep improving, even if there's no room for improvement. I also feel their pressure. Just study, they say. I can't wash the dishes, mow the lawn or take a summer job. Their entire goal is to see me succeed." Similarly, Kieu Oanh says, "I know that my success is a big thing for my parents, and I sense that pressure. But it's also important to me. For example, I'm in speech contests. People look at me funny when I begin, since I'm a refugee and they expect my accent to be horrible. So I feel good when they're surprised that my English is fluent."

When I raise the question of identity, Kieu Oanh replies, "My parents made me learn to read and write Vietnamese—or at least tried to. At home we speak Vietnamese and English, but my Vietnamese isn't that great. I'm more comfortable in English. I think in English. So I guess I'm not really Vietnamese but more American—maybe a kind of transitional Vietnamese."

Striving to preserve their heritage, a Buddhist center in Orange County conducts courses for Vietnamese

Amid the smoke and noise from firecrackers set off to drive away evil spirits and haunted souls, dancer at pre-Tet festival does Dragon dance. In feudal era dance was for royalty, now it's for children.

children on Sunday mornings. About 200 kids in gray shirts and blue jeans, ages 7 to 18, sit attentively around tables in the courtyard as Vietnamese instructors lecture them. The youngest are practicing tones, a basic of the Vietnamese language, while teenagers listen to talks on Vietnamese culture. However, I notice they speak English among themselves. Standing over one girl, I also observe that her loose-leaf binder contains, besides her notes in Vietnamese, a picture of Vanilla Ice, the American rap star.

By contrast, many young Vietnamese are dropouts, and some belong to criminal gangs. They owe their delinquency to the war or years in refugee camps. Many came to America without one or both parents, and miss the restraints imposed by tight kinship ties. Often they lack respect for their fathers, who they feel have forfeited their traditional authority by their failure to adapt to the United States. And many, carried away by the permissiveness of America, rebuff hard work and discipline.

Little Saigon is prey to teenage Vietnamese gangs like the "Santa Ana Boys" and "Cheap Boys," or the "Wally Girls" and "Pomona Girls," their female counterparts. Armed with knives, pistols and even semiautomatic weapons, they steal cars, rob stores and extort from merchants. They specialize in "home invasions," breaking into the homes of affluent Vietnamese and forcing them to hand over their concealed valuables by torturing children, raping women in front of husbands or killing a family member. Some graduate into nationwide Asian crime syndicates engaged in big-time rackets like prostitution, illegal gambling, check scams and narcotics.

One morning I tour Garden Grove with Thien Cao, a community service officer with the Garden Grove Police Department. Nodding at youngsters in punk haircuts and expensive tennis shoes in cafés and pool halls, he identifies them as gang members. "Our biggest problem," he goes on, "is persuading the Vietnamese to report crimes. Their instinct if they witness a crime is to run away. It's a hangover from the war, when they tried to stay out of the crossfire. In Vietnam the cops were often corrupt, so they distrust the police here. They're also afraid to testify, since the courts usually release gang members on bail or recognizance, and victims fear being attacked again—which often happens. Another headache is getting suspects to talk. The prospect of a juvenile home doesn't scare a kid who has risked escape and spent years in a refugee camp."

Civic duty in Little Saigon is organized but very separate from the larger community. While few Vietnamese merchants belong to the Westminster Chamber of Commerce, the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce is thriving. Chiefly concerned with their own interests, they are also split into various factions, a division reflected in the dozens of flimsy Vietnamese-language

journals that represent one group or another. As refugees, many are depressed as well by the burdens of survival, and they tend to focus on personal problems rather than on community affairs. Not a single Vietnamese sits on any of Orange County's town councils. But many indulge in "exile politics," mainly through impassioned anticommunist movements that maintain that they can promote change in Vietnam. Several Vietnamese critics of these movements have been murdered by extremists. Dr. Ton That Niem explains the appeal of these groups for numbers of refugees. "Just as someone whose leg has been amputated insists that he can still feel his foot, they cannot accept the fact that they are cut off from their native land."

I drive to the town of Costa Mesa one afternoon for a meeting of the National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, whose well-dressed supporters resemble innocuous Rotarians as they listen to idealistic speeches. But the group did try to live up to its name in 1987, when its founder, Hoang Co Minh, attempted to infiltrate a platoon of commandos into Vietnam from adjacent Laos. Minh, a former South Vietnamese admiral who had worked as a house painter in Washington, reportedly died, and the unit was wiped out in the action. Five front members have since been indicted by a federal grand jury for tax evasion and for conspiring to divert donations into a chain of noodle soup restaurants.

Little Saigon's future partly hinges on the future of Vietnam. Should the Communist regime crumble, as Communist regimes are doing everywhere, many older refugees may be tempted to return. Anticipating that prospect, some have already been investing in Saigon businesses under recent reforms that permit private ownership. But younger Vietnamese seem to be too directed toward mainstream America to go back to Vietnam, except on visits. The most ardent exponent of assimilation I hear is Minh Le Tran, the Saddleback High School student—whose views, I am told, are shared by many in his generation. "I feel shackled in Little Saigon," he says. "When I grow up, I want to live in some place like Maine, where it's not all Vietnamese, and I can play bridge with my neighbors on Thursday night."

Cheerful young consumer visits one of Frank Jao's shopping centers. Here he can buy Vietnamese food, medicines, magazines and even audiotapes—but all of the clothing is displayed on Caucasian mannequins.

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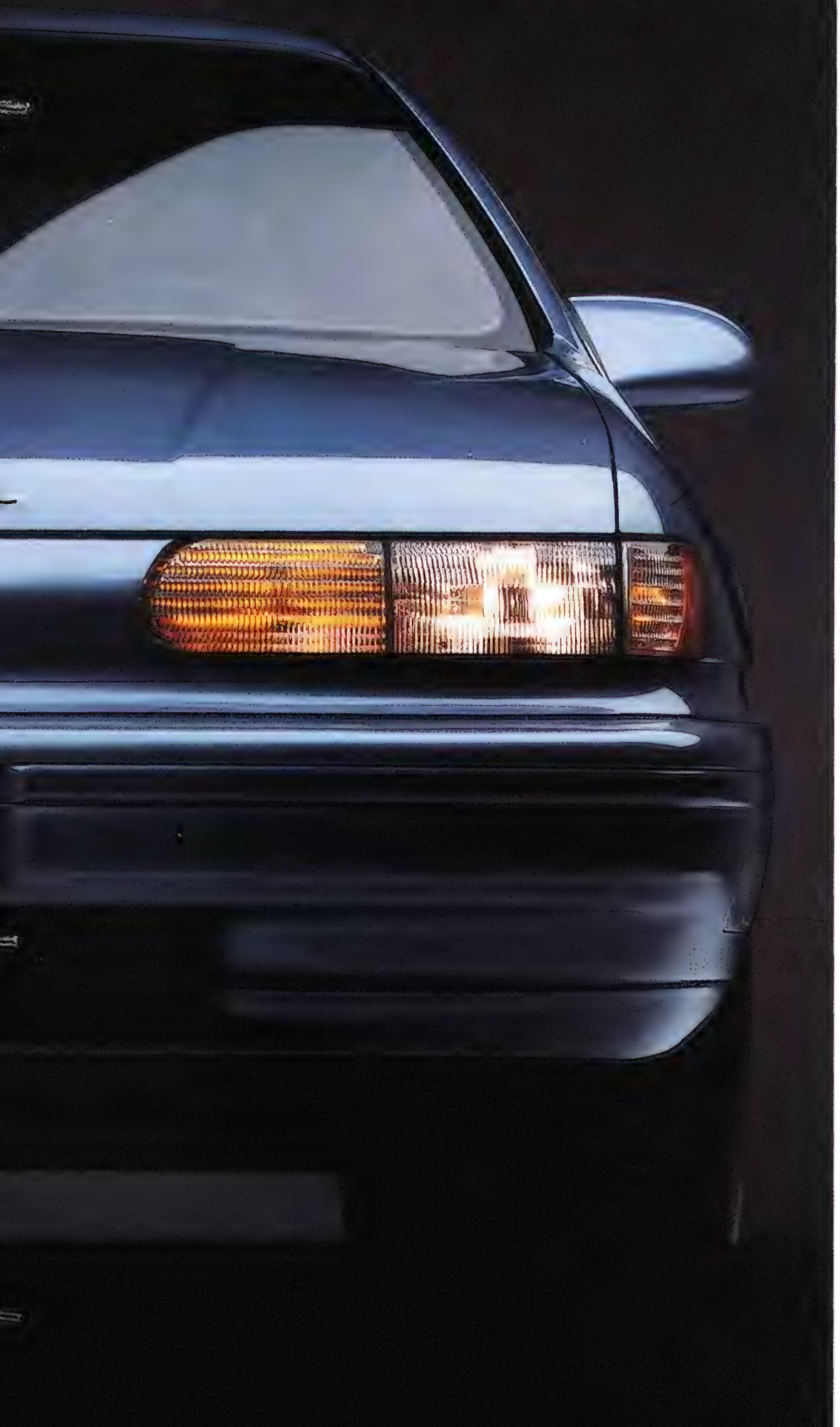

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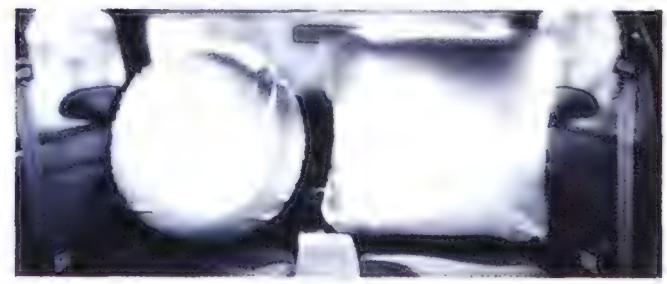


THE SATISFYING CONCLUSION.
The 1992 Ford Taurus. An excellent reminder that the best sequels are the ones that know why the original was a success.

HAVE YOU DRIVEN A FORD LATELY?

Ford

By Stanley Meisler

The golden age of Andalusia under the Muslim sultans

From the 8th to the 15th century, Islam ruled in Spain's rich southern region; its priceless artwork is now on view at the Met in New York

On January 2 of this year, several thousand festive Spaniards crowded into the downtown streets of Granada to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the surrender of the last Islamic stronghold in Spain to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492. That event, as every schoolchild in Spain knows, completed the Reconquest—the final defeat of the Muslims who had occupied much of the Iberian Peninsula for more than 700 years, the final victory of Christianity over Islam in Spain. For the anniversary ceremonies, priests celebrated a mass at the cathedral where Ferdinand and Isabella, known in Spain as the Catholic Monarchs, are buried, and dignitaries led a procession back to the city hall, where Mayor Jesús Quero shouted to a cheering crowd, "Granada! Granada! Granada! In the name of the illustrious Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, long live Spain! Long live the King! Long live Andalusia! Long live Granada!"

A half-mile away, however, in the Albaicín, the old Arabic quarter of narrow streets, mazelike alleys and whitewashed stucco homes that nestles opposite the great hill of the Alhambra, perhaps 50 Spaniards,

Dazzling fortress and palace city of Nasrid sultans, the Alhambra dominates the hill high above Granada. When enclave was begun in the 13th century, the 500-year-old Muslim presence was already in decline.

some of them converts to Islam, gathered. They met by the monastery that now stands on the spot where, according to legend, the submissive and chastened Sultan Boabdil handed the keys of the city to the triumphant Catholic Monarchs.

Now, half a millennium later, the small group of Spaniards marked that surrender with a few moments of silence. Then their leader, Aberraman Medina, lamented, "The conquest of Granada in 1492 was a rehearsal for what would happen later in America—a liquidation of cultures, traditions and beliefs."

This conflict of moods in Granada reflects the excitement and anguish of history in today's Spain. Ever since the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 and the transformation of Spain into a democracy, Spaniards have felt the need to examine their past and their identity. It is an examination that often brings pain and confusion and controversy, but this does not halt the search.

The self-examination is intensifying in this 500th-anniversary year. The rest of the world knows 1492 as the year that Christopher Columbus discovered America. But Spaniards know it, as well, as the year Ferdinand and Isabella defeated the Arabs in Granada and then expelled the Jews from Spain. They also know that all these cataclysmic events are interrelated. Columbus, in fact, accompanied the Catholic Monarchs to Granada and could not get approval and funds for his voyage until Ferdinand and Isabella diverted their attention from the Arabs to his scheme. And the crusading victory over Islam nourished a Christianity in the Catholic Monarchs so fervent and exclusive that they refused to tolerate Jews in their kingdom.

Spaniards have been aided in their quest for the past by an extraordinary exhibition entitled "Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain." Earlier this year, it was mounted within the walls of the renowned palaces of the Alhambra, which were built by the sultans of Granada in the dying years of their dynasty. It then moved this summer to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it will remain on view until September 27. Displaying 97 pieces of Spanish Islamic art of every variety, from ceramics and carpets to swords and manuscripts, "Al-Andalus" gives Ameri-

Photographs by Robert Frerck

cans one of their first looks at the little-known but splendid Islamic side of Spain.

It is not easy to sort out history and identity in Spain. Too much has been cloaked for centuries by Spaniards trying to hide their antecedents from a society that discriminated against those who could not prove what was called "purity of blood"—a line of descent from old Spanish Christians and not from converted Arabs or Jews. One of Spain's most distinguished journalists, José Antonio Martínez Soler, who grew up on the heavily Arab-influenced Almería coast, is now studying Arabic to understand his roots. He has an ironic line about the confusion over the search for self-identity these days. "I like to say," he told me recently, "that all of Spain now believes it is one-half Arabic, one-half Jewish and one-half Spanish."

An opulent stage set for the last act

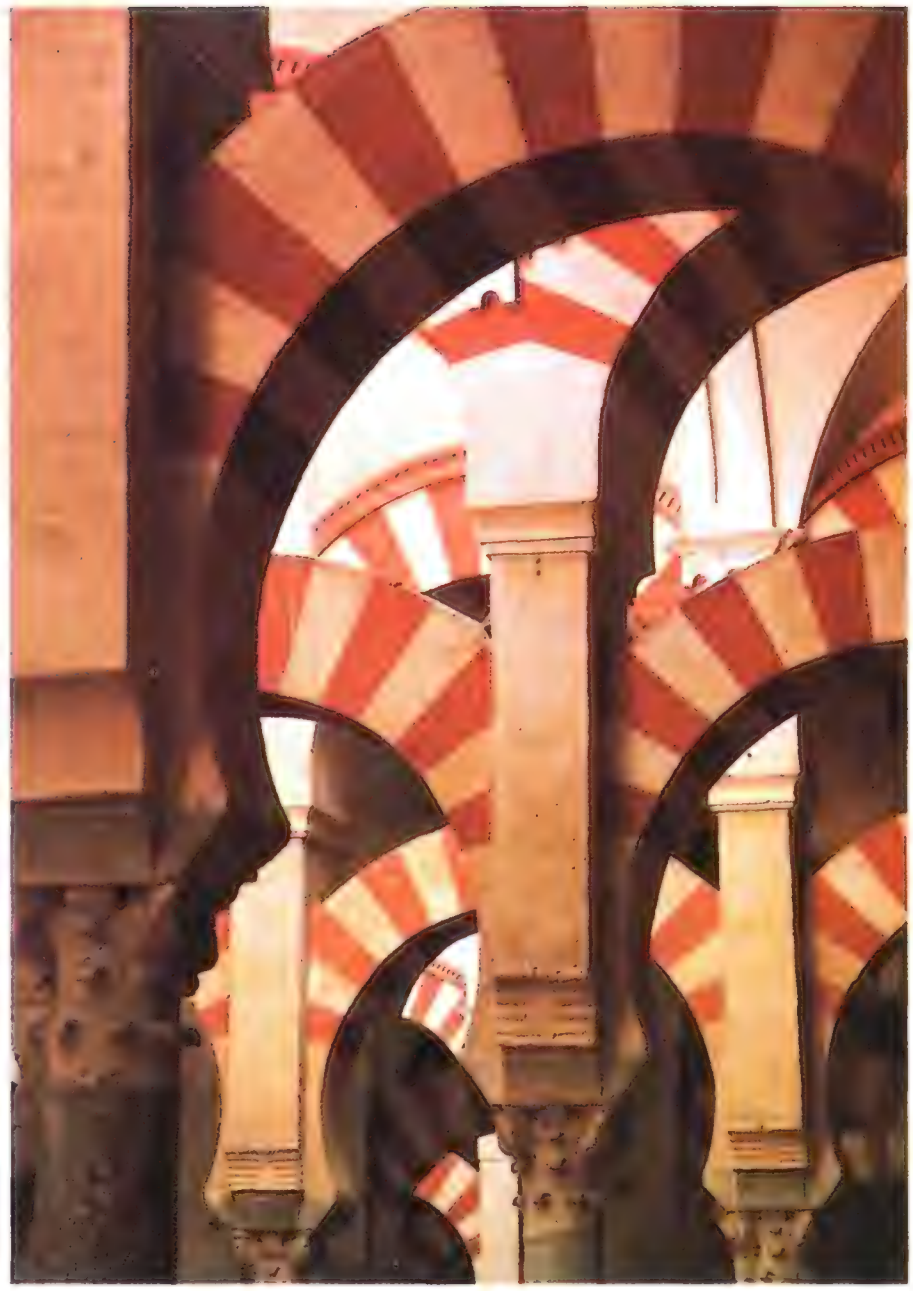
Even appearances sometimes get in the way of understanding history. The breathtaking palaces of the Alhambra are not what they seem, for their grand splendor represents defeat, not triumph. "The Alhambra is like a big stage set," says Jerrilynn D. Dodds, an associate professor of architectural history at the City University of New York and a special consultant to the Met. "It was cheaply done but in an opulent way. It was an incredibly defiant gesture. They were defying the Christian onslaught with their own sophisticated culture. But it's also a melancholy monument trying to ward off eventual demise."

The history needs to be sketched briefly, for not much is known outside Spain about the farthest reach of Islam into Europe. In the year 711, a Berber commander led 7,000 Arab and Berber troops from North Africa across the narrow Strait of Gibraltar into a weak and divided Visigothic Christian Spain. Within months, the Muslim invaders captured the Christian center of Toledo in central Spain. Continuing their northern march, they were finally turned back 20 years later in southern France. They then consolidated their hold on Spain, ruled most of it without challenge for three centuries, and then slowly retreated under Christian attack over the centuries until the final defeat in 1492.

The Muslims called Spain *al-Andalus* (a name that survives as "Andalusia," the southern region of Spain). Although the colonists were Arabs from the Middle East, and Berbers and mixed Arab-Berbers from North Africa, Spaniards tended not to make distinctions but usually called them all Moors (*Moros*, in Spanish) or sometimes all Arabs.

In less than two centuries, al-Andalus was transformed from a distant outpost to a center of Islam. Its capital of Córdoba, which grew to a population of one million, soon had few rivals in power and wealth anywhere in the world. As Desmond Stewart wrote in his book *The Alhambra*, by the mid-8th century Córdoba was regarded as the "first true metropolis in the West since the fall of Rome." Exporting lustrous ceramics, intricate textiles, wools, silks, felts, linens, carved ivory and European slaves throughout the Muslim world, the city was challenged as a market only by Constantinople and Baghdad. Its libraries and poets were celebrated. Sultan Abd al-Rahman I and his successors built the Great Mosque of Córdoba, an astounding work of architecture, to symbolize the political and religious power of al-Andalus. In 929, Abd al-Rahman III proclaimed himself a caliph, a successor to the Prophet Muhammad, thus assuming the same status as the rulers of Baghdad and Constantinople.

Within a century, however, the dynasty collapsed, and al-Andalus splintered into a cluster of petty kingdoms. Taking advantage of this weakness, the Spanish Christians in the north reconquered Toledo in 1085.



Horseshoe arches in Great Mosque of Córdoba, built in 786, blend Roman and Islamic architectural forms.

Stanley Meisler, former Madrid correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, *wrote on the Prado in January and on Berlin's Pergamon Museum in October 1991.*

Dome surmounts the *mihrab*, or prayer recess, a 10th-century addition to Great Mosque of Córdoba.

The loss provoked the fearful kings into calling for help from a powerful and puritanical Muslim dynasty in North Africa. Two waves of Islamic zealots, the Almoravids and then the Almohads, ruled al-Andalus for 146 years, but their hold weakened under the pressure of the Christian armies in Spain and North African rivals in Morocco. When the Christians captured the Almohad capital of Seville in 1248, their chroniclers described the conquest as "one of the greatest and noblest that was ever . . . accomplished in the whole world."

Al-Andalus then found itself reduced to a mountainous domain in the southeastern corner of Spain, with 250 miles of coastline near North Africa. A succession of sultans from the Arab-descended Nasrid dynasty ruled this domain from Granada for 254 years. Perhaps because they were the last, perhaps because they built the Alhambra, the Nasrid sultans have been romanticized and celebrated by poets and novelists more than any other Islamic rulers of Spain.

For more than two centuries, the Nasrids staved off the Christians with a series of vassalage treaties continually signed and broken, and with a succession of skirmishes halted by truces. In fact, Boabdil, the last sultan, had received Christian help in his battles with his father and uncle for the throne, and had even sent congratulations to the Catholic Monarchs upon the defeat of his fellow Muslims at Málaga. But when the Christians began to devastate the farmlands that supplied Granada, Boabdil's forces attacked Christian fortresses. Ferdinand and Isabella then vowed to march onward without stopping until they placed a cross upon the towers of the Alhambra.

The Alhambra, which means "red citadel" in Arabic, takes its name from a fort that had been built from the red clay on the hill many years before. Looking for a stronghold in perilous times, the Nasrids had created a royal fortress city on this hill during the 14th century with palaces, enormous walls, formidable gates, military towers, a mosque, sumptuous gardens, and crowded residential and shopping streets for artisans and servants.

The Alhambra never fell in battle. Boabdil, facing certain defeat, negotiated a treaty of surrender with Ferdinand and Isabella, who pledged, falsely as it turned out, to allow his subjects to keep their Islamic faith and customs. According to legend, Boabdil, as he headed south into exile, looked back at Granada and the Alhambra and burst into tears. His mother, whose scheming had helped put Boabdil on the throne, told him with contempt, "You do well to weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man."

It was a jubilant triumph for Christianity. The politically powerful Cardinal Mendoza of Spain carried the silver cross that Ferdinand had borne throughout the crusade and hoisted it upon the tower of the Alhambra fortress. An eyewitness wrote to the Bishop of León, "It was the most notable and blessed day that there ever was in Spain." In Rome, the bells of St. Peter's rang out as the pope and his cardinals led a solemn procession to celebrate high mass for the victory.

"A Moslem pile in a Christian land"

Spain has no finer and more intact monument from the Islamic era than the Alhambra. Victor Hugo called it a "palace that the genies have gilded like a dream and filled with harmony." Washington Irving, who lived there for a few months, did more to popularize the Alhambra throughout the Western world than any other writer in the 19th century. He described it as "a Moslem pile in the midst of a Christian land, an Oriental palace amidst the Gothic edifices of the West, an elegant memento of a brave, intelligent, and graceful people who conquered, ruled and passed away." A Spanish poet wrote of a blind beggar in Granada pleading with a woman leaving church, "Give me alms, my lady, for there is no worse affliction in life than to be blind in Granada."

Typical of decoration at Alhambra, arched window combines molded stucco above with tile mosaic below.

Every year, 1.5 million people, half of them foreigners, visit the Alhambra. Of the six palaces, five of which perched on the escarpment overlooking Granada, two—the Palace of Comares and the Palace of the Lions—remain in almost pristine form. On walls and ceilings, swirls, strange geometric shapes, flowers, leaves, vines, acorns, shells and Arabic calligraphy twist in and out of one another. The patterns are sometimes symmetrical but, because of the calligraphy, often not. Most of the work has been done in stucco—plaster mixed from lime and earth—supplemented by ceramic tiles and carved cedar wood. Except for a few traces, mostly of blues, the once-polychrome stucco has lost its color, but the tiles bring color into every room.

Architecture and decoration are sometimes indistinguishable. Many of the rooms have ceilings fashioned with layers of hanging stucco stalactites; a visitor looking up has an illusion that the ceiling soars forever. Within the Palace of Comares' Hall of the Ambassadors, the sultan's reception room for envoys, every arched window frames a different view of Granada below. The magnificent Court of the Lions, with its famous fountain, is the inner patio of the Palace of the Lions that sultans used for relaxation and pleasure. Here, strolling among various arches and columns, one will see what seem like a dozen different patios.

The calligraphy on the walls of the Alhambra is so intricate that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the Arabic script from the weaving vines and flowers. The motto of the Nasrid dynasty is repeated scores of times: "There is no conqueror but God." The simple prayers "Blessing" and "Happiness" can be found just as often. Nearby, at the library of the Renaissance palace that Charles V of Spain, the Holy Roman Emperor, built after the Reconquest, Emilia Jiménez is preparing her doctoral dissertation for the University of Granada. It is a study of the Arabic inscriptions of the Alhambra. Jiménez explained to me that several different subjects are treated. "You can find dynastic mottoes, brief prayers, quotations from the Koran, maxims, notes about the construction, instructive information, praises of the sultans, and poetry," she said.

"I am the garden, I awake adorned in beauty"

There are, in fact, 30 poems scattered throughout the palace and its grounds, poems often brimming with adulation for the Alhambra itself. "I am the garden, I awake adorned in beauty: Gaze on me well, know what I am like. . . . What a delight for the eyes! The patient man who looks here realizes his spiritual desires," sings 14th-century poet Ibn Zamrak in an inscription in one of the chambers surrounding the Court of the Lions.

It is surprising that so much of the Alhambra has been preserved for more than 600 years. When Wash-

Garden in the Generalife, a country palace outside the Alhambra walls, provided a getaway for the Nasrid sultans. The water, cooling in the arid climate, was moved by means of a sophisticated hydraulic system.

ington Irving arrived in 1829, he reported that its palaces had been filled only a few years earlier "with a loose and lawless population—contrabandistas who . . . [carried] on a wide and daring course of smuggling; and thieves and rogues of all sorts. . . . It is difficult to believe that so much has survived the wear and tear of centuries, the shocks of earthquakes, the violence of war, and the quiet, though no less baneful, pilferings of the tasteful traveller." Irving concluded that Granadians could be right when they insisted that the Alhambra was "protected by a magic charm."

Preservation, however, probably owes more to the interest of the Spanish kings. In awe of its beauty, the monarchs designated the Alhambra as their royal residence in Granada. Although few of them actually spent time there, the status ensured funds for maintenance. But by the 18th century this royal interest had slackened. When Napoleon occupied Spain, his troops used the Alhambra as their barracks in Granada. Irving commended the French for repairing and restoring the Alhambra, even though the troops tried to dynamite all its towers before fleeing Granada in 1812. A daring Spanish soldier managed to cut the main fuse leading to the dynamite, but he could not prevent all damage. Partly in response to pleas from Irving, whose book *Legends of the Alhambra* achieved worldwide popularity, the Spanish kings resumed the funding of repairs and upkeep. In 1870, the Alhambra was declared a national monument with its maintenance assured by an annual appropriation from the government.

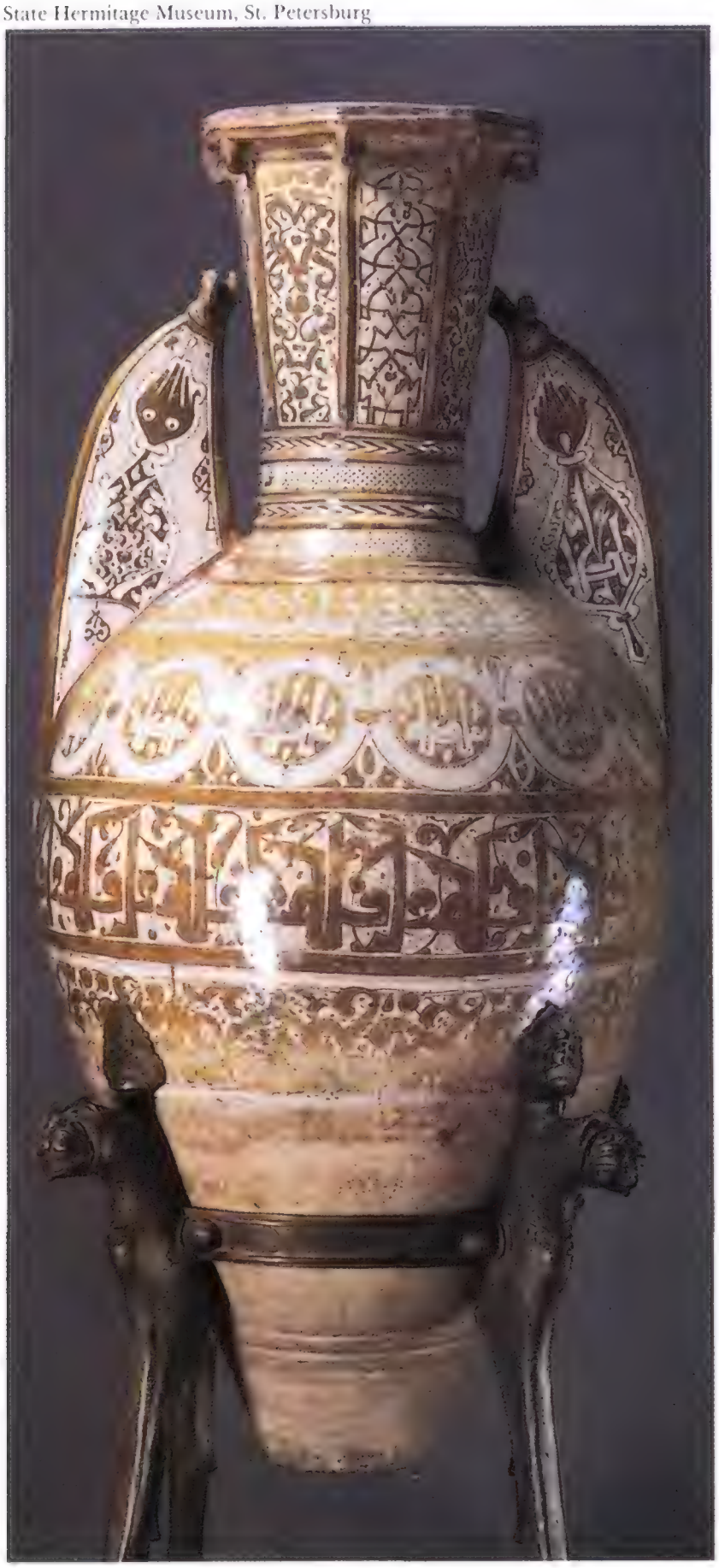
"As a result of this, we have been restoring the Alhambra all the time for 120 years," says Mateo Revilla Uceda, the 43-year-old former professor of art history who has been director of the Alhambra for the past five years. "But deterioration is not a major problem. There is no contamination at the Alhambra. And the climate is dry." The Alhambra seems to have benefited as well from the choice of material. "The main material of the Alhambra—stucco—is very flexible, but it is also very resistant," says Revilla Uceda. "All the decoration gives the material an illusion of richness."

The idea for the exhibition came out of a chance conversation five years ago between the Metropolitan's assistant director, Mahrukh Tarapor, and Spain's Minister of Culture, Javier Solana. Solana had come to the Met to see an exhibition of the paintings of Francisco de Zurbarán, which Tarapor had organized. After the opening, the minister asked her to take him through her favorite gallery in the museum. The Bombay-born Tarapor, a specialist in Islamic art, led Solana to the

Arts of al-Andalus on exhibit at the Met

In the first comprehensive show devoted to the Islamic arts of Spain, 97 works have been brought together from collections in 14 countries. The masterpieces here attest to the Muslim artists' highly sophisticated, inventive sense of design.

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



Earthenware vessel from the 14th century, 46 inches tall, is one of the highly celebrated "Alhambra vases."

Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària, Barcelona

Pomegranates and coroneted shields decorate textile woven in the Nasrid kingdom in the 15th century.

Bibliothèque Ben Youssouf, Marrakesh

Page from a 20-volume Koran was written in Maghribi script during the Almohad period in the 13th century.

Louvre Museum, Paris

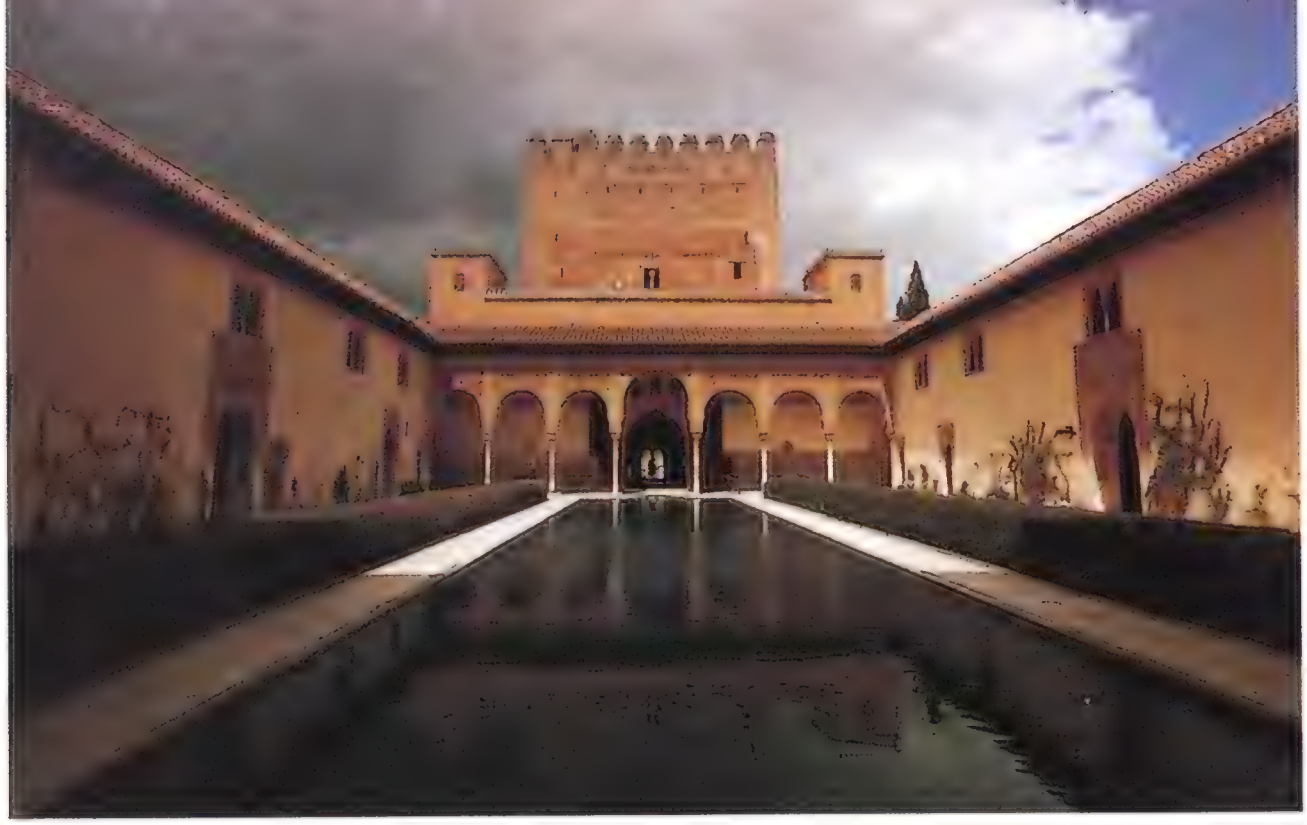
Bronze Monzón Lion, from the 12th or 13th century, was part of an Islamic castle's fountain.

Carved ivory handle is flanked by cloisonné enamel on the sword of Boabdil, last Nasrid ruler.

Museo del Ejército, Madrid

Louvre Museum, Paris

Lions attack bulls in one of four medallions on the outside of 10th-century ivory pyxis.



Of the six palaces in the Alhambra, the main one was the Palace of Comares, in which executive functions were performed. This is palace's central courtyard, which leads into the towered Hall of the Ambassadors.

small Islamic rooms and told him there was so little space devoted to Islamic Spain because there still had not been enough study of this period. "Do you think the time is right for such study now?" Solana asked. "Would it be appropriate to prepare an exhibition on such art in Spain for 1992? Will you do it? Let's shake on it." Though somewhat surprised by this sudden proposal, Tarapor agreed to explore the idea.

The result is a rare look at the variety of the arts of al-Andalus. Newcomers to Islamic art sometimes feel that it all looks alike. There is an obvious reason for this. Islamic art tends not to strive for blatant novelty but to take familiar models and rework them with only subtle changes. Although it is not true, as many people believe, that the depiction of people and animals is forbidden in the Koran, much of Islamic art uses abstract patterns rather than realistic figures, and this tends to foster a mood of sameness. This seeming uniformity is reinforced as well by the heavy use of the Arabic script in design—a script that is familiar to most Muslims throughout the world. Yet, within this seeming uniformity, there are significant regional and epochal differences, which the Metropolitan exhibit makes clear.

Spain has a special place in Islamic art. The most striking features of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, for example, are the myriad double arches—one horseshoe arch perched on another—throughout its interior. This arrangement had been used before, but never to such startling effect. Spain's ceramic lusterware (plates and tall Alhambra vases that shone and glittered, often in green and manganese colors), intricate silk textiles, and elaborately carved ivory boxes were widely acclaimed and sought. Many of the artworks of al-Andalus were luxury goods, reflecting the wealth and power of the succession of sultanates in Spain.

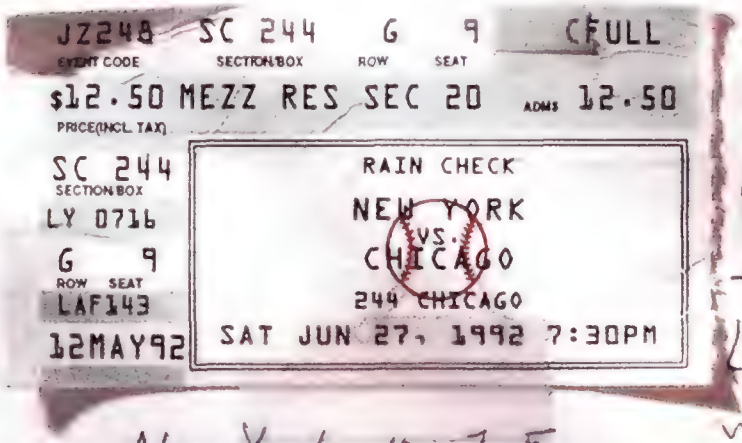
The stellar pieces in the exhibition include a 10th-century Cordoban pyxis on loan from the Louvre in Paris. A pyxis is an ivory box fashioned from the natural cylindrical shape of a tusk and probably used to hold gifts of ambergris, musk and camphor—aromatics used as cosmetics and medicines. This one is carved with a host of elaborate scenes, including one showing two horsemen, accompanied by cheetahs and birds, picking dates off a tree.

The exhibition also features a 15th-century steel sword with a carved ivory hilt that once belonged to Sultan Boabdil, a sword that is usually on display in the Museum of the Army in Madrid. The pieces from the Met's own Islamic collection include a fragment of a 14th-century silk textile with designs that look like the stuccowork of the Alhambra. The Hermitage in St. Petersburg has contributed an enormous, lustrous, 14th-century earthenware vase, four feet high, known as an "Alhambra vase." It has wings like flying buttresses against its neck and Arabic inscriptions calling for "pleasure" and "health" and "blessing." It is believed that the Nasrids placed vases like this throughout the Alhambra for no other function than decoration. With this cachet of royal chic, Alhambra vases were to become some of the most cherished exports from al-Andalus.

A novice to Spain might be surprised that the Spanish Christians allowed so much art to remain from a civilization that had been defeated in a religious crusade. "Christians didn't look down on Islamic art," said Jerrilynn Dodds. "They treated it as the latest fashion. Muslim textiles were so prized that the Christians wrapped relics in them. When Christians expelled the Muslims, they turned the mosques into Christian churches."

At the Met, the exhibition includes a small part of the Alhambra itself—a part that has been missing from Granada for a century. In the 19th century, when governments were lackadaisical about their archaeo-

New York is really cool. Today Dad and me got up before Mom and went to Central Park. We saw lots of joggers and rollerskaters. One guy did tons of tricks. Dad said maybe I could get a pair. Then we went back to the hotel and got Mom and went to the Intrepid. WOW! It's big! The guide said you could fit 3 1/2 football fields on the Intrepid. We also went to see the new Barosaurus at the American Museum of Natural History. It was awesome! On the way we saw a movie being filmed. I can't wait to tell Steve. We ate hot dogs & ices from a stand. And then we went to the World Trade Center. From the top we could see the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. That's where my great Grandma and Grandpa went through when they came to America. Dad says what we're doing tonight's a surprise. I hope it's a baseball game. I see why Mom keeps saying



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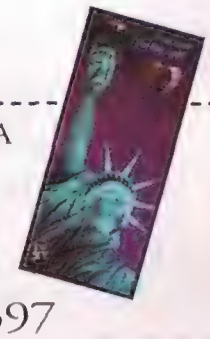

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logical treasures, a German banker, Arthur Gwinner Dreiss, bought the Tower of the Ladies in one of the ramparts of the Alhambra. Before leaving Spain he sold the structure back, but he dismantled the wooden ceiling with its intricate geometric patterns and took it with him to Germany. It now belongs to the Museum of Islamic Art in the Berlin suburb of Dahlem, which is loaning the ceiling to the Met. Ironically, the ceiling that visitors to the Alhambra see in the Tower of the Ladies is a reproduction put up years ago.

The fall of Granada in 1492 did not end the story of Islam in Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella promised that the Muslims could continue practicing Islam in peace, but the promise was soon broken. Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros ordered a campaign of forced conversion and mass baptism under threat of torture and prison. By 1500 he could report back to the Catholic Monarchs that "there is now no one in the city who is not a Christian, and all the mosques are churches." The converts were known as Moriscos.

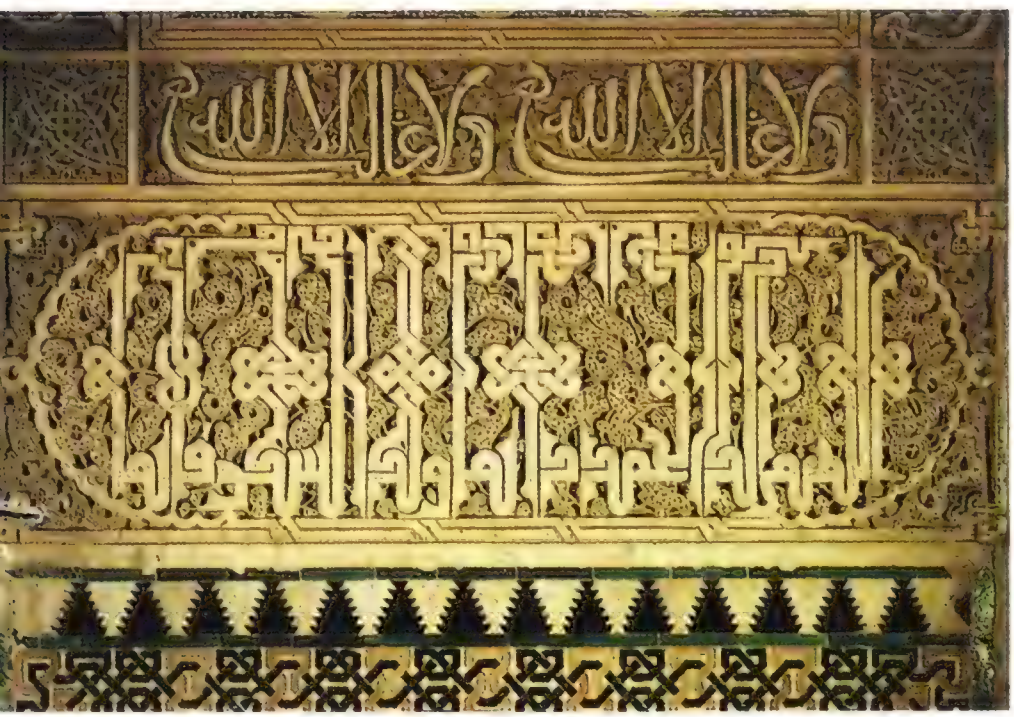
But most Moriscos knew little about Christianity and kept to their Muslim ways while going to churches that were once mosques. The Inquisition sent its agents to Granada to punish the new Christians who were backsliding into Islamic heresy. Royal edicts banned Arabic customs: Moriscos couldn't use the Arabic language, especially to name their children. Women had to drop their veils. Even the public Arab baths were closed as dens of sin. In vain, a Morisco leader protested that these baths were used only for cleanliness; men and women were never allowed in at the same time. If sinful women wanted to meet their lovers, he said, "they would manage this more readily by going on social calls, or visiting churches, or going to religious festivities and plays where men and women were mixed up together."

Buying up Morisco land at bargain rates

In 1568 the desperate Moriscos rose in rebellion in the Alpujarra Mountains between Granada and the Mediterranean Sea. The Spaniards suppressed this uprising with great ferocity and brutality and, to make sure this would never happen again, forced most Moriscos to leave the Granada region and live elsewhere in Spain. Spaniards were invited to pour into Granada and buy up Morisco land at bargain rates. All this, however, did not solve what the Spaniards regarded as their "Morisco problem"—a large population of seemingly unchristian Christians. In 1609, Spain, claiming that this population might somehow become a fifth column for the Islamic Turks threatening Europe, decided to expel all its Moriscos, just as it had expelled all its Jews a little more than a century before. It is estimated that, within five years, 300,000 Moriscos were forced out of Spain. Perhaps 20,000, for one reason or another, managed to elude the expulsion order and remain.

They did not lose all their ways in a rural and provincial Spain that entered the modern age only a few decades ago. "When I grew up on the Almería coast," Martínez Soler told me, "there were women who wore veils and carried jugs of water on their heads. As late as 30 years ago, you could still see women with veils, even in church. Just a few years ago, I was the master of ceremonies at a music festival and was amazed at some of the songs of the people who came down from the Alpujarra Mountains. The words of their religious hymns were Catholic, but the music was Arabic."

Spaniards, in fact, are now proud that they did not wipe out all the traces of Islam. During a visit in 1986 to the unique cathedral that was created centuries ago out of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, King Juan Carlos, the successor to Ferdinand and Isabella in democratic Spain, said, "The light that shines upon us from the cathedral of Córdoba is neither moribund nor tremulous. It is intense, penetrating, illuminating the way. It represents the embrace of all the communities of the world."



Alhambra's wall inscriptions become part of the design; words at the top read, "There is no conqueror but God."

Intricate geometric mosaic at Alhambra may have been done by Muslim craftsmen after the Christian victory.

Courtyard is the heart of the Nasrid sultans' Palace of the Lions, which was used for pleasure and entertainments.

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You don't have to look like a fish to succeed as one

A portfolio from South Australia highlights the bizarre adaptations evolved by bottom dwellers as the 'stealth' hunters of the sea

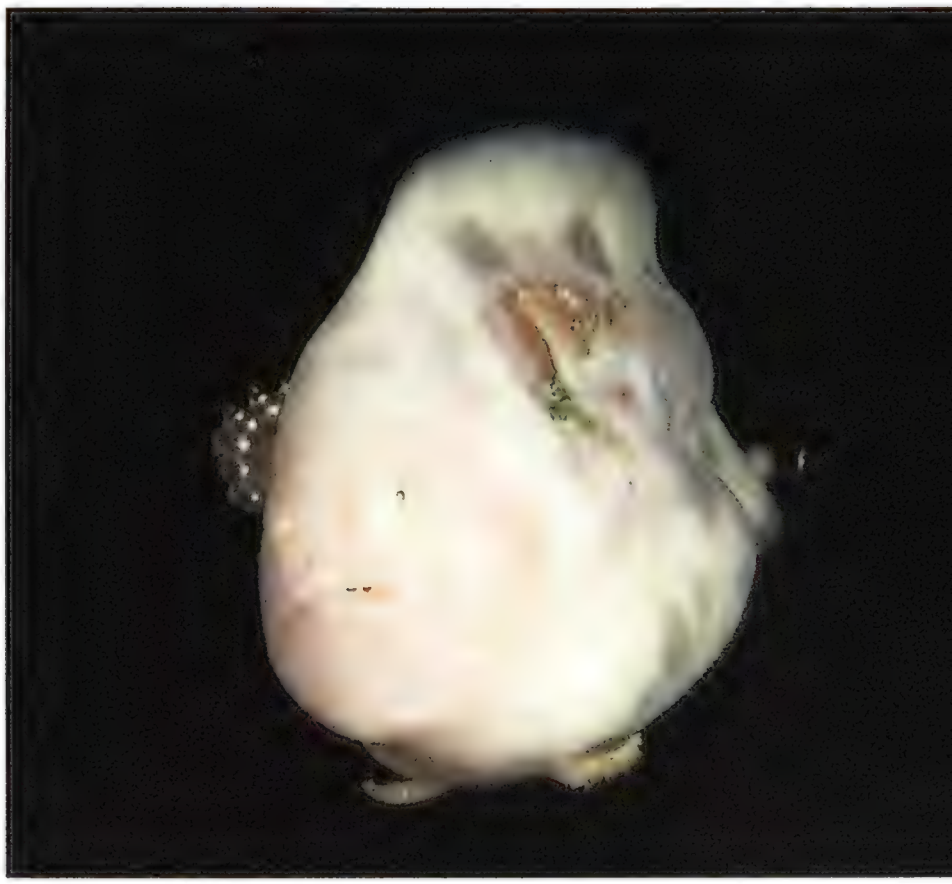
Say the word "fish," and most of us think of a streamlined creature swimming through the water somewhere between surface and bottom. Assuming clear water and reasonable proximity, the animal is plainly visible, and must depend on speed and agility to catch its prey or avoid being caught. We gape at the acceleration of a barracuda, which has an almost quantum-mechanical ability to disappear from Point A only to reappear at Point B. We marvel at the speed of tuna, cruising in schools at up to 40 miles per hour. Fishermen's adrenaline rushes amid the ferocity of a school of feeding blues. The more philosophical wonder how the thousands of individuals in a school of mullet can turn as one in a strobelike flash of silver light.

Even when we think of fish of darker depths, of cod and tilefish and giant grouper, we imagine that if we could be there, and bring our own light, we could see them all. We could watch shoals of Alaskan pollock pass over our face masks like flights of passenger pigeons, taking hours to go by. In a nightmare we might watch the approach of a great white shark, zeroing in on what it considers an oddly impaired pinniped.

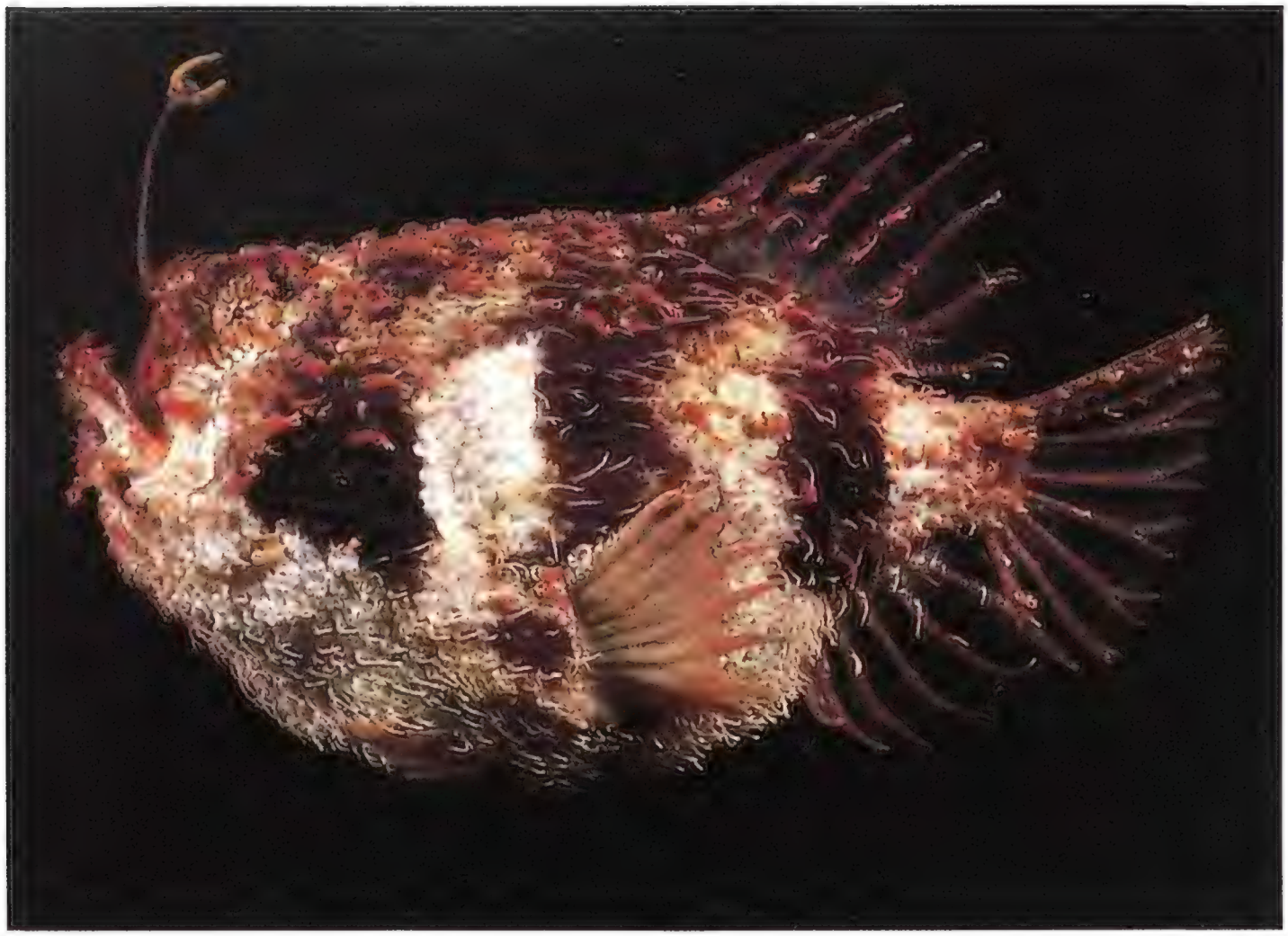
All of the above may constitute the essence of "fishness" for most of us, but nature in its wild profligacy is not nearly so limited. On these pages photographer Fred Bavendam gives us a gallery of fish that hide in the sand, look like seaweed, lie camouflaged on the bottom, turn porcupine instead of fleeing or have simply adopted such fantasy shapes that they might have been invented by a child. Animals that are in every sense true fishes have found myriad ways to avoid being visible, to eschew open water, to remain motionless. These are mostly bottom dwellers, "stealth" fish that survive by confounding the popular notion of

Common stargazer lies buried in the sand, only its camouflaged eyes and mouth visible, waiting for suitable prey to approach and be gulped into its outsize maw. Some species, although not this one, use electric shock to facilitate capture. In the top inset, we can see what the entire fish with its upthrust eyes and mouth looks like; in the lower, the master of ambush, which grows to two feet, buries itself tailfirst in the concealing sand.

Porcupine fish at right has swallowed water to balloon itself into a ball and raised its spines to make itself appear as unpalatable as possible to potential predators. At far right is a cryptic anglerfish, its "fishing rod" and lure hidden in a groove on its snout. Both its coloration and patterns of spots, some eyelike, help it hide when background is right. It is a widespread but small fish: largest known specimen is 12 inches long.



Photographs by Fred Bavendam



Fleshy tentacles cover this tasseled anglerfish; when it lurks in a patch of red algae, it is nearly invisible to the smaller fish that are attracted to its "worm" lure.

Looking like a creation for a children's film, a common sea dragon swims by sea tulips (on stalks) and sponges. It is closely related to the far more familiar sea horse.

The blue ribbon for disguise in nature should go to the leafy sea dragon, which looks more like a piece of seaweed than a lot of the real thing does. It feeds by drifting along the edge of a kelp bed, picking off small opossum shrimp that never have a clue that they are in danger—until that trumpetlike mouth sucks them in.

piscinely correct behavior. They are weak swimmers that have evolved shapes that are among the most interesting of all fish forms.

In some of the photographs, Bavendam has found extraordinarily cryptic fish out in the open—or has enticed them out ("I can get you on the cover") so we can in fact see them. The tassels on the anglerfish and the fleshy flaps on the leafy sea dragon work so well that humans use the same technique. Stalkers and soldiers have found that covering their hats and clothes with little strips of loose, flapping material tends to obscure their shapes and therefore their identities when they stay still. They almost "disappear."

All the pictures were taken along the south coast of Australia, of fish often overlooked by the hundreds of thousands of divers who flock farther north to Queensland's Great Barrier Reef. While many of these fish are extraordinary, they are not rarities confined to Australian waters. Nearly all are representatives of families found around the world. The familiar sea horse, for example, a first cousin to the sea dragon, is found on both coasts of the United States and elsewhere around the world. Anglerfish are cosmopolitan; so are pufferfish and blennies.

Bavendam's pictures enable us to see what we might otherwise miss, not to mention deepen our appreciation for the variety of nature. It is a question of learning to see, like spotting a stick insect among plant stems or a mottled moth against tree bark or, even better, lying face down in our garden to discover a Lilliputian world. It is exhilarating when a creature that has been before our eyes the whole time suddenly takes shape, popping out from the background. Always it is a question of seeing, and these pictures provide, to borrow a term from astronomers, good seeing.
John P. Wiley jr.

The back half may look familiar, but the business end of a spotted wobbegong is not your typical shark. It is usually harmless, but there is a record of one tearing the foot off a fisherman who stepped on it.

White-spotted anglerfish, no slouch at camouflage, protects its eggs in a crevice in the rocks. It deploys a lure that looks like the small crustaceans fed on by hapless gobies that are the larger fish's principal food.

A male Tasmanian blenny peers from tunicate-lined burrow; purpose of antlerlike tentacles is unknown.

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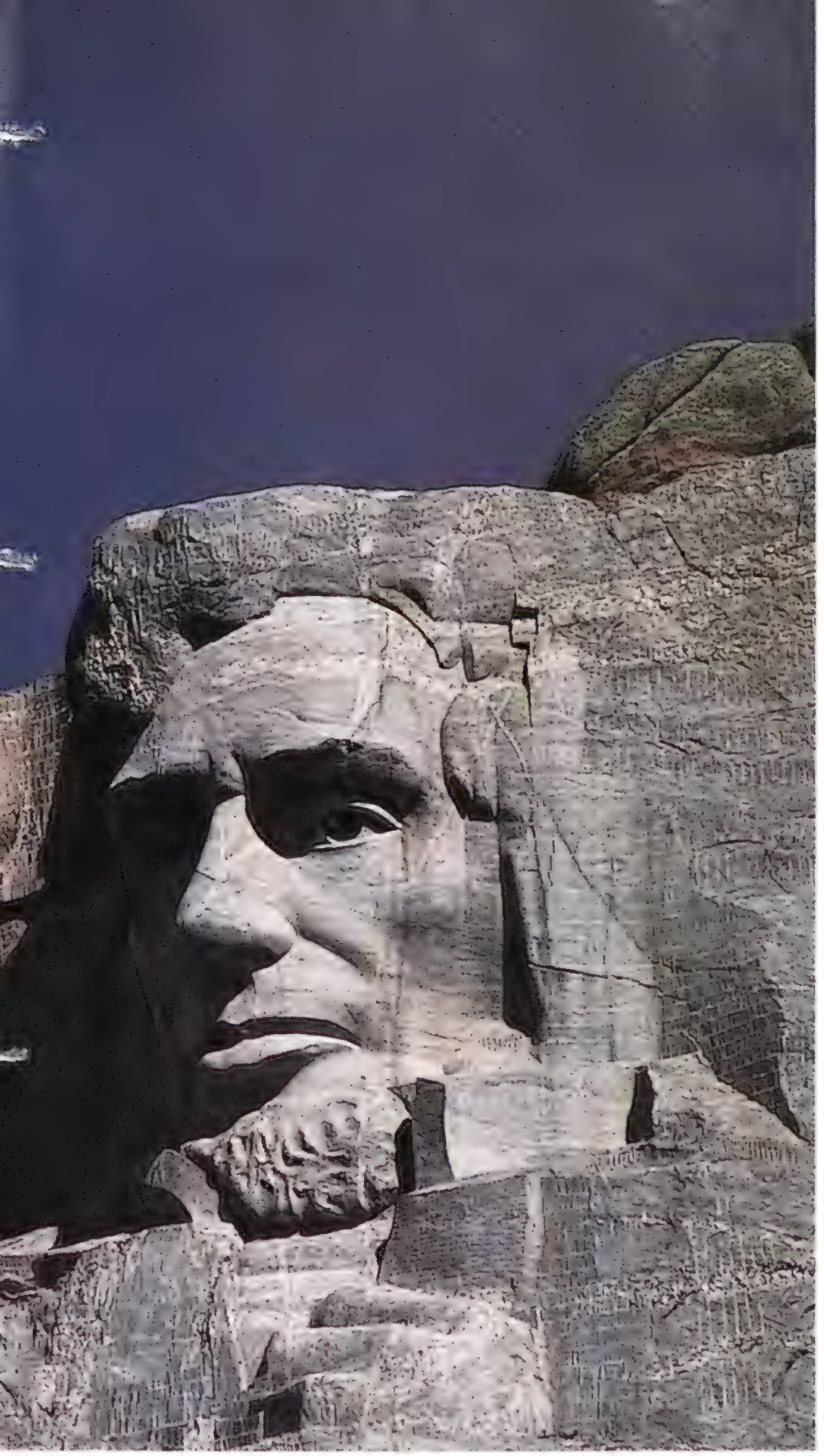
Buckle up, America!

By Donald Dale Jackson

Gutzon Borglum's odd and awesome portraits in granite

A feisty, intractable sculptor spent 14 years turning a South Dakota mountainside into an oversize paean to the Presidency



Washington, Jefferson, T. Roosevelt and Lincoln would no doubt be astonished by their 60-foot-high visages.

The tourists—families, middle-aged couples, carloads of kids, busloads of seniors—drifted onto the terrace continuously, wearing shorts and T-shirts and sneakers, carrying cameras and camcorders, speaking a dozen different languages. You could spot those who were seeing Mount Rushmore for the first time—they'd flinch a little, as if recoiling from the impact. Often they would glance quickly at the four granite faces and then look away for a moment before gathering themselves for a second, longer look.

The buzz on the terrace was steady but low-volume, as if raising one's voice might make one of the Presidents blink in disapproval. "They look so, so *white*," a woman said, struck by the contrast between the ivory-like heads and the gray, fissured rock around them. "What gets me," a man murmured to his wife, "is that they've all got their mouths closed. Pretty strange for politicians." A Texan stared at the mountain for several minutes before delivering his judgment: "Well, they surely carved a lot of stone outta that sucker."

Most tourists moved on after 20 or 30 minutes. Some went to the visitors center to watch the video narrated by South Dakota native Tom Brokaw ("Critics said it was preposterous . . ."). Others descended a staircase to hear a National Park Service ranger declaim on the volcanic, constantly feuding sculptor who carved the monument ("Gutzon Borglum didn't get along with everyone . . ."). Still others moseyed to the restaurant-gift shop to try to figure out where the impeccably tailored Cary Grant got into trouble in *North by Northwest*, or to eat an ice cream cone in front of a sign reading "Thomas Jefferson brought ice cream to America."

American hyperbole, hacked out of stone

The Big Four on the mountain viewed all this with their customary equanimity. Washington looked aristocratic, Jefferson visionary, Lincoln humane, and Teddy Roosevelt strangely subdued. If you hang around Rushmore a few days and keep looking, as you can't help doing, your mind—let's be honest here, *my* mind—eventually falls prey to irreverent musings. Isn't this whole thing a little—well, preposterous? Is the word "bizarre" too much here? We're talking about a 14-year project to hack four 60-foot-high heads out of a wilderness mountain 174 miles from everywhere. Is this American hyperbole in stone? Yes. The exemplification of excess? Yes, again. Definition: *Rushmoritis, n.* a condition of inherent outrageousness.

Is it any wonder that cartoonists are forever making merry with Rushmore? The place almost parodies itself. But more than that, Rushmore holds a fierce, unbudgeable grip on our national imagination. Advertisers can't resist it. Metaphor-makers cite it constantly. Rushmore is immovability, overstatement, the symbol of symbols, icon of icons. Maybe that's why people have never stopped arguing about whose faces ought to be up there. While it was still being carved there were campaigns on behalf of Woodrow Wilson and Susan B. Anthony (with Eleanor Roosevelt's support). FDR and JFK have their advocates, and a man reportedly collected $100,000 in a futile attempt to add Ronald Reagan to the fab four. John Wayne? Yep, some think so. And not long ago a pair of California disk jockeys rallied thousands of listeners to the standard of their candidate: you guessed it—Elvis. (Oh well, at least he got his postage stamp.)

One of Borglum's earliest commissions, a figure of Abraham Lincoln dedicated on Memorial Day in 1911, presides over a gathering of shoeshine boys at site near the entrance to City Hall in Newark, New Jersey.

It is somewhat surprising that this symbol of symbols hasn't attracted more political grandstanding over the years. Besides the occasional President—George Bush was there to celebrate the monument's 50th anniversary last year—the only two high-profile groups that have used Rushmore as a platform are the Sioux Indians and the environmental group Greenpeace. The Sioux, who had plenty of cause, since the surrounding Black Hills were originally theirs by a treaty rescinded when gold was discovered, protested atop the mountain for several weeks in the summer of 1972. Greenpeace activists, concerned about acid rain, occupied the peak for a few hours in 1987. The mountaintop is generally off-limits to all but Park Service personnel.

While the attitude of most Americans toward Rushmore probably falls somewhere between indifference and vague approval, the "Shrine of Democracy" has had its detractors over the years. The monument was conceived and carved in an era (1927-41) when environmental sensitivity was largely dormant. Cora Johnson, a feisty South Dakota editorial writer, was an exception. "Man makes statues but God made [the mountains]," she wrote. "Let them alone." FDR's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, was no fan of Rushmore, and neither was Newton Drury, who was director of the National Park Service when the memorial was completed in 1941. "I hope [Rushmore] will remain as it is now," Drury dryly advised a Congressional subcommittee, "unique, and the only one of its kind." It is safe to say that a similar proposal today would succumb in the first round of hearings.

If Rushmore is bizarre, outrageous and outsize by definition, it is no trick whatever to find the reason. So was Gutzon Borglum. "Life is a kind of campaign," Borglum wrote once to his daughter, Mary Ellis. "People have no idea what strength comes to one's soul and spirit through a good fight." Conflict and creativity were forever entwined in Borglum's mind. His title for his unfinished autobiography was *The One-Man War.* For him, carving this cliff in the beautiful Black Hills was the culmination of a stormy and prolific career. He had been heading for Mount Rushmore all his life.

Despite his exotic-sounding name, he was born on the American frontier in Idaho, in 1867, and was raised in St. Louis and Nebraska. His parents were Mormon immigrants from Denmark who followed the custom of plural marriage; his mother, Christina, and her older sister Ida were both married to Gutzon's father. The most devastating event of his childhood came when his father left the church and abandoned Christina, taking

Although he hasn't taken an American history course since high school, Donald Dale Jackson reports he instantly identified all four Presidents on Rushmore.

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At 67, Borglum had completed head of Washington for Rushmore when this photograph was taken in 1934.

With view of Rushmore as backdrop, the sculptor models images in his Black Hills studio, early 1930s.

their six children, when Gutzon was 5. Howard and Audrey Karl Shaff, authors of the respected Borglum biography *Six Wars at a Time*, wrote that after his separation from his mother "he became an angry, rebellious child who remained angry for most of his adult life." In later years he never spoke about his Mormon past.

He showed artistic talent as a teenager, and when he moved to Los Angeles with his family at 17 he began painting seriously. He made a splash almost immediately, becoming first the pupil and later the husband of an artist named Lisa Putnam, who was 18 years older than he was. He blossomed further during stays in Paris and London, where he hobnobbed with other artists and became more interested in sculpture. When he returned to the United States in 1901 he was ready to set up shop as a sculptor. By then he had rejected the Old World in favor of the intensely American perspective he would trumpet ever afterward. "Art in America should be American," he declared, "drawn from American sources, memorializing American achievement."

Borglum opened his New York studio at a time when fashion coincided with his ambition. The big money in American sculpture at the turn of the century was in monuments, and the hot-eyed, densely mustached bravo from the rugged West by way of the salons of Europe was immediately in vogue. Commissions and hefty paychecks poured in. His bronze study of a band of rampaging horses, *The Mares of Diomedes*, became the first made-in-New York sculpture exhibited in the city's Metropolitan Museum of Art. He created the superb equestrian statue of Civil War general Philip Sheridan in Washington, D.C., and a large marble bust of Lincoln that stood for years in the Capitol rotunda.

"A man should do everything"

He knew everybody—he had met Theodore Roosevelt when TR was New York's police commissioner—was invited everywhere, was interested in everything. He was a timer at an early Wright brothers demonstration flight. Former heavyweight champion Bob Fitzsimmons frequented his studio. Borglum avowed that the strenuous life was the life for him. "I'm not the average American who does one damned thing," he told a journalist. "I do everything—boxing, fencing, wrestling, horseback riding. . . . A man should do everything, turn handsprings, somersaults. The trouble with American life is that it is not vigorous enough."

His marriage to Lisa Putnam had broken up after their return from Europe, and in 1909 he married 31-year-old Mary Montgomery, who came from a family of American missionaries and held a PhD in ancient languages from the University of Berlin. Mary soon learned that an accounting degree would have been

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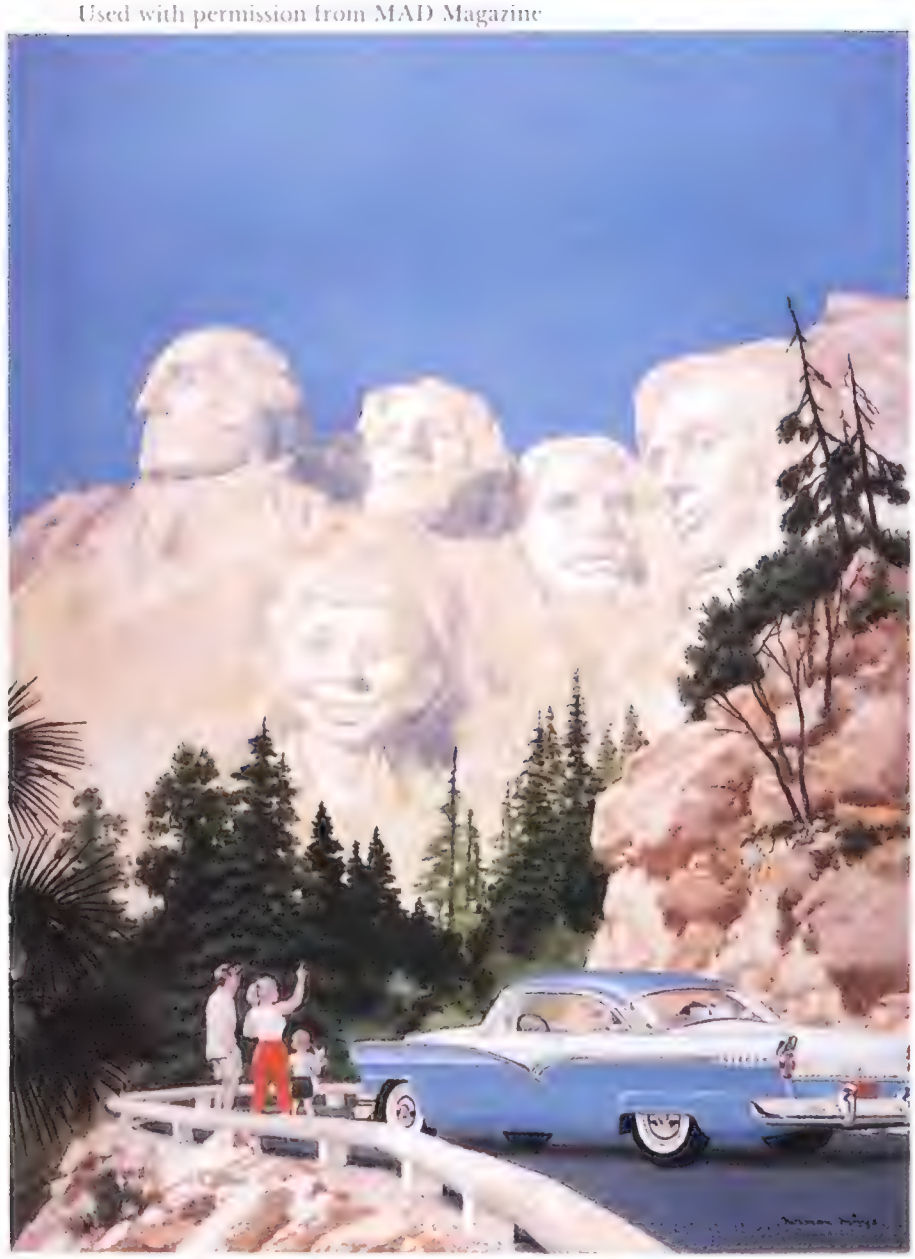

Alfred E. Neuman joins Presidential pantheon in *Mad* magazine send-up of Rushmore's venerable quartet.

better preparation for life with Gutzon. He was forever being attached by creditors, forever in debt (by 1940, a year before his death, the total was $200,000).

Like other high-profile artists from Mark Twain to Salvador Dali, Borglum had a gene for showmanship. He treated his growing fame as a soapbox, hurling himself into politics as a Connecticut leader in Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Presidential campaign of 1912. He persuaded Woodrow Wilson to let him lead a high-decibel, high-visibility investigation of profiteering in the aircraft industry during World War I. The ideal solution, he realized, was for him to become President himself, though this was impossible, he lamented, because America needed his art for "a record of what was intended to be our republic."

Borglum was at his disputatious best when the subject was art. When the angels he carved for New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine were criticized as too feminine, he leaped joyously into another brouhaha. The lively debate that ensued over the gender of angels ended when the sculptor smashed some of the figures—but created others as androgenous as the first. This was an artist who worshiped at the temple of his own independence—"I personally do not need government," he once wrote, and he wasn't kidding—and took orders from no one.

But there was more to life than strife and effort. "Work was fun for him," his daughter, Mary Ellis Powers, recalls, "but so were politics, making speeches, fishing, flying. He loved to have his family around him. I started traveling with him at 4 or 5." Borglum was thrilled to become a father in his mid-40s and doted on his son, Lincoln, and Mary Ellis. "He loved movies, and we'd all go," Mary Ellis recalls. "I think we saw *David Copperfield* ten times." He liked big, flashy cars and hired chauffeurs to drive them. "We didn't want him driving because he'd never watch the road," she says.

Wanted: a monument bigger than a snuff box

Borglum's taste for the colossal in art developed early. In 1916 he complained that "there is not a monument in this country as big as a snuff box." While working on Rushmore he wrote that "there is something in sheer volume that awes and terrifies, lifts us out of ourselves, that relates us closely to what is greatest in our evolving universe." Size itself was an artistic statement. He got his first crack at colossal art when he was invited in 1915 to create a monument to the Confederacy on the side of Stone Mountain in Georgia. Here at last was scale to match his vision. After inspecting the mountain he announced his plan for a massive frieze 1,500 feet long and 400 feet high depicting Robert E. Lee and his army.

He overcame two major mechanical problems at Stone Mountain by adopting solutions he later applied to Rushmore. The first was how to work on a sheer cliff. His answer was a leather bosun's chair equipped with a two-part seat belt and attached by cable to a hand-cranked winch atop the cliff. The second question was how to hack figures out of a vast granite wall, and the solution was to blast with carefully measured dynamite charges. He had barely begun when America's entry into World War I halted work on the mountain.

The artist whose most enduring legacy would be a celebration of democracy was, regrettably, a racist and an anti-Semite. When Borglum resumed work at Stone Mountain after the war, it was with the help of the Ku Klux Klan, which had been reborn at Stone Mountain in 1915. Borglum joined the Klan and, as with everything else he did, he went whole hog, becoming a cabinet member and one of the inner circle. His apologists claim that he was obliged to become a Klansman to be accepted by the Stone Mountain backers, but Borglum's bigotry surfaced elsewhere as well, notably in his advocacy of a racially exclusive immigration

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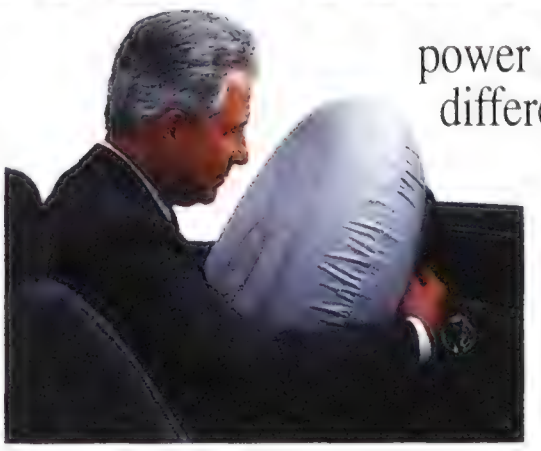

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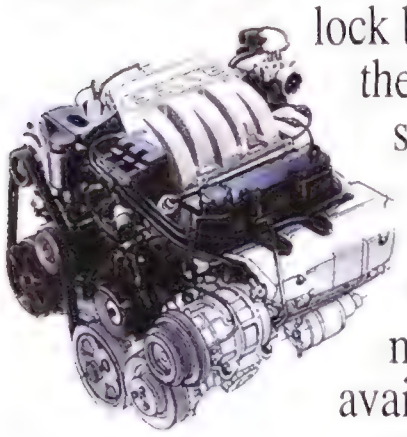

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Clutching a microfilm-packed figurine that has sent spies after them in hottest pursuit, Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint courageously traverse Mount Rushmore in cliff-hanging scene from Hitchcock thriller *North by Northwest* (this death-defying stunt was, to be sure, merely a simulated caper).

policy and in frequent anti-Semitic diatribes, despite his friendship with prominent Jews, such as Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. The Park Service still gets an occasional angry letter from a citizen who has just discovered the racial views of Rushmore's creator.

The Stone Mountain project became entwined in Klan politics while work stalled and Borglum grumbled about interference and a shortage of cash. The conflict came to a head in 1925, with the carving still far from complete: the Stone Mountain Association fired him, Borglum in turn destroyed his models for the monument, and a warrant was issued charging him with willful destruction of property. The drama that ensued was a tale he enjoyed retelling and no doubt embellishing—Borglum the fugitive climbing into a friend's car and highballing it to safety in North Carolina with a Georgia sheriff in hot pursuit. (The monument was later completed by the sculptor Augustus Lukeman, who destroyed all of Borglum's previous work.)

The idea that led ultimately to the Mount Rushmore memorial originated with Doane Robinson, a scholar who was South Dakota state historian. Robinson believed that mammoth effigies of Western luminaries, such as Lewis and Clark, Jim Bridger and the Sioux chief Red Cloud, carved on the granite "needles" in the Black Hills would lure tourists. He wrote to Borglum, and the exultant wire he received in reply a week later convinced him that he had found the right man. On visits to South Dakota, Borglum embraced the idea and made it his own. The statues shouldn't be of Western heroes, he decided, but of our greatest leaders—his first nominees were Washington and Lincoln—because to arouse national interest, as he explained to Robinson, you had to "pitch the note high enough." And the monument shouldn't be on the Needles but on 1,000-foot-long, 400-foot-high Mount Rushmore, which he first glimpsed on a horseback tour of the hills in 1925.

His first major coup was enticing President Calvin Coolidge to Rushmore in 1927; Coolidge's blessing was critical since it opened the way for federal funding. Coolidge rode to the base of the mountain on horseback and delivered a short speech praising the proposed monument as "distinctly American in its conception, in its magnitude, in its meaning." Soon afterward, the 60-year-old Borglum appeared, suspended theatrically from the top of the cliff in his bosun's chair. He drilled six holes, the "master points" for the head of Washington, which was to be carved first.

Funded by donations initially, work on the mountain began soon afterward, but when cash ran out two months later the project closed down for half a year. Borglum had meanwhile expanded his vision of Rushmore to include Jefferson and Borglum's old friend TR. South Dakota Senator Peter Norbeck managed to maneuver a bill through Congress in 1929 providing up to $250,000 in federal grants to match donations.

But private contributions, especially after the stock market collapse, remained woeful. A breakthrough came in 1932 in a sweetheart deal again engineered by Norbeck. He got $50,000 in federal unemployment relief funds diverted to Rushmore, then persuaded the Treasury to release $50,000 to match it, the government thus matching its own contribution.

Many of the men who worked as drillers, blasters, callboys, steelmonkeys and the like (when there was money to pay them—wages started at 40 and 50 cents an hour) had been hardrock miners in the Black Hills. Most were grateful for a job in the Depression, even if

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Borglum and his son, Lincoln, traveling up the cliff face by tram, inspect progress on the Jefferson head.

At home with poodle Cap, Borglum's daughter, Mary Ellis Powers, recalls venturesome, fun-loving father.

it meant working for the most exotic bird they had ever seen. "He was a peacock, he never quite fit in South Dakota," ex-Rushmore worker Raymond Berg says. Berg and the other workmen admired Borglum's energy but chafed under his impatience and imperiousness. "I was a callboy," Berg recalls. "I'd perch somewhere, like on Washington's wig, and tell the winchmen when to let the slings up or down. When the chief was in a sling I had to be extra careful. If we got him a few inches high or low he'd get mad."

No one disputed the chief's eye or his vision. "He could tell if a line was plumb to a quarter-inch," ex-carpenter Glenn Bradford says admiringly. George Rumple, once work crew foreman, recalled Borglum staring at the cliff when only Washington's face had been carved and asking him if he could "see" the other three. "I said, 'No, sir,' and he said, 'I can see them, George,' and he could, you know. He was a genius."

Creating the monument was inevitably a blend of art and engineering, and Borglum evolved a system that reconciled the two. Working with plaster models in a studio, he carefully calculated the distances and angles between key points on the heads and then transferred the measurements to the mountain at a ratio of 1 to 12. He showed drillers precisely where to drill holes for the explosive charges detonated at the end of morning and afternoon shifts. Workmen used hand tools for the final finishing under Borglum's exacting supervision. He achieved the remarkably lifelike effect in the eyes by leaving rectangular blocks of stone that reflect the sunlight inside each 11-foot-wide eye.

To keep Rushmore in the news, Borglum staged elaborate dedication ceremonies when each head was finished. The Washington bust was dedicated in 1930, but recurrent money shortfalls caused a six-year hiatus before Jefferson joined him.

The men who daily climbed the 506 steps to report for work atop the mountain became a band of brothers who labored and played together. "We were like a family," says former driller Orville Worman. "If there was a fight at the Saturday dances, the Rushmore guys helped each other." A new man's initiation on the mountain was a jerk of his winch cable causing a sudden drop of his sling harness. "It gave me three extra heartbeats," recalls Emmett Oslund, another ex-driller. They worked without hard hats but sometimes wore goggles and masks over their nose and mouth. Oslund and several others later contracted silicosis from inhaling dust at Rushmore and in Black Hills mines.

Most of them appreciated the work and the camaraderie. "On Sundays I'd take my friends up top and put them in a sling," Raymond Berg remembers. They took pride in the Rushmore amateur baseball team, which reached the state championships in 1939. "I was hired for the job because I played shortstop," Worman says. "I remember Borglum brought our paychecks to us during the championship at Aberdeen, else we'd never have got home."

The chronic financial strain that afflicted the Rushmore project eased when Senator Norbeck got Congress to eliminate the matching-fund provision in 1934 and then to kick in another $200,000 a year later. With money flowing steadily, the pace of work picked up. Lincoln's face, gazing toward the others from the right

side of the cliff, was unveiled in September 1937, in a ceremony marred only slightly when a radio reporter announced that the fourth and final bust would honor "our present President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt."

Theodore Roosevelt's face, with its 24-foot-long mustache and masterful representation of glasses by means of a nosepiece and a narrow ridge of stone suggesting frames, was dedicated in July 1939. Borglum told an interviewer the following year that the work that remained would take about two and a half years.

But by early 1941, with war on the horizon, money was again running short. Borglum calculated that another $278,000 would finish the job, and in February he set out for Washington to lobby for it personally as he had often done before. In Chicago he visited a doctor friend and complained of prostate discomfort. The doctor recommended surgery, which was performed on the 17th. On the 28th Borglum learned that FDR was drastically cutting all nondefense spending; federal funding for Rushmore was suspended indefinitely. A blood clot triggered by the surgery caused a pulmonary embolism on March 2. He died four days later, 19 days short of his 74th birthday.

His son, Lincoln, supervised the final touch-up labor on the mountain until the money was gone, and all work ceased on October 31, 1941. The final cost was $989,992, including $87,000 paid to the sculptor. Amazingly, no one died building the monument, a record even more remarkable when compared with other major construction projects in those years—11 workmen died on the Golden Gate Bridge and 14 on the Empire State Building.

Mount Rushmore looks essentially the same today as it did when the tempestuous, overachieving and often outrageous man who created it last saw it. The tourists who behold it from the terrace seem impressed and sometimes even awed. And the workmen who built it, about 30 of whom returned to Rushmore for the 50th-anniversary party last year, have come to take a kind of bashful pride in their feat. "None of us thought it was a big deal when we worked there," Raymond Berg says. "But I look at it now and I feel kind of semi-proud; it makes me think I accomplished something."

Gutzon Borglum doubtless would have been more than semi-proud, he would have screamed his triumph to the Black Hills sky. "My father was prouder of Rushmore than of anything else he did," Mary Ellis Powers says. "He always had the courage of his convictions in the simplest way—he believed anyone could do whatever they wanted if they had guts and determination."

National Park Service's Bob Crisman (left) and Tim Vogt, suspended in bosun's chairs anchored by steel cables, winch their way along the Presidential noses to do annual repair work on Rushmore's famous faces.

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New York director Ralph Lee (left, rear) leads actors Tzyak Kusman (center) and Palas Xilon, members of the Lo'il Maxil theatrical group, through improvisations. Lee returns to Mexico each year to work with troupe.

By Patrick Breslin

Coping with change, the Maya discover the play's the thing

In the highlands of southern Mexico, Mayan writers use theater as a way of preserving the ancient oral traditions of their people

Petu' Krus Krus (left) listens to stories about spirits during a performance for students and anthropologists.

The play begins. A black-haired woman in high heels, a tailored woolen coat buttoned up to her throat, walks to center stage. She stands in front of a simple set, a couple of basins on the ground before a curtain representing the doorway to a small house. "There really aren't any bogeymen," she assures the audience in precise Spanish. "People don't even talk about them." As she speaks, she begins to unbutton her coat. Beneath it she is wearing not modern dress, but beautifully woven traditional garments from Zinacantán, a Mayan community in Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state. "At least there aren't any bogeymen now," she says, sounding less certain about it as she steps out of her modern shoes. She folds the coat and puts it to one side. "Anyway, they just hang around roads and bridges," she allows as she bends to begin scrubbing the laundry.

This deceptively simple opening scene accomplishes a couple of things. First, it transports the theater audience away from the familiar Western world of today to centuries-old Mayan communities, a transition that is in fact part of the daily drama of millions of native people who are caught between two cultures in Mexico and throughout the hemisphere. It also introduces the creative responses of one group of Mayan writers and actors who must adapt to the relentless pressures of contemporary life while maintaining the core of the ancient traditions that have sustained them through half a millennium of conquest.

The play, *A poco hay cimarrones* (Watch Out for Bogeymen), is based on fright stories from colonial times when *cimarrones*, Africans who escaped slavery on the sugar plantations of what is now Chiapas, lived free in the forest as hunters and bandits. The actress is Chave Jvaris Ch'ix, a young native of the community of Aguacatenango, who was the first woman to join Sna Jtz'ibajom—the House of the Writer—after it was formed in 1982. Sna Jtz'ibajom is an organization of Mayan writers intent on capturing their people's oral history and traditions. From recording old stories, they moved to publishing them, and eventually, to presenting them on the stage.

Although Sna Jtz'ibajom's plays are usually presented before Indian audiences, this performance is different. It takes place on the patio of the Casa de las Imagenes (House of Images): a coffeeshop, bookstore and photography gallery in San Cristóbal de las Casas, the beautiful mountain town that is the urban center for the Chiapas highlands. Many of those in attendance are anthropologists and other students of the Maya. For most of this century, the Maya have been an academic growth industry. Archaeologists poke at the tombs and ruined cities of the dead ones, and ethnologists dote on the live ones, more than one million in earthquake-prone Chiapas, and millions more in neighboring Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. Hundreds of books and monographs have been published about the Maya. So steady has been the presence of scholars among them that some communities are jokingly referred to as "Harvard Indians" or "Stanford Indians" or "University of Chicago Indians."

Photographs by Macduff Everton

Sna Jtz'ibajom grew out of these connections. Its founding members were men who had worked as "informants"—the anthropologists' term for helpful members of the culture being studied. Often, anthropologists will work for years with the same informant, and the relationships are frequently close. So there was some surprise a decade ago when many of the scientists gathered in San Cristóbal for a conference titled "40 Years of Anthropological Research in Chiapas" were confronted by their informants.

"You have awakened our interest in our culture"

The complaint was one often heard by foreign researchers: that they extract their data like miners extract ore, cart it away for processing elsewhere and leave nothing behind. "You have awakened our interest in our own culture," the informants told the scientists. "You have published many studies, but always in other countries where we never see the results. . . . We would like at least to put on paper our customs for the sake of our children and grandchildren."

Some of the informants, who had spent countless hours helping anthropologists collect stories, dreams and other pieces of their people's oral traditions, had already begun to work on their own. But they had no resources. A sympathetic and prominent Mexican poet, Jaime Sabines, got them in to see his brother, then governor of Chiapas. The governor provided enough money to get Sna Jtz'ibajom started, but when his tenure ended, the money ran out. And so they turned to the anthropologists and, specifically, to Robert Laughlin, who was codirector of the conference.

Laughlin arranged for them to address the assembled anthropologists, who responded with some immediate financial support for the Mayan writers and contacts with international funders. Cultural Survival, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Inter-American Foundation in Rosslyn, Virginia, also provided funds. Ever since, Laughlin has served as adviser to Sna Jtz'ibajom and struggled to secure continued support from foundations in the United States and Europe.

Laughlin, who divides his time between the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., where he is a curator, and the Chiapas highlands, had been studying the community of Zinacantán and its language since 1959, when he was a Harvard graduate student. The centerpiece of his anthropological work is the *Great Tzotzil Dictionary of San Lorenzo Zinacantán*, published by Smithsonian Institution Press in 1975. Evon Vogt, who started Harvard's involvement in Zinacantán, called the 45,000-word volume "the most complete American Indian language dictionary ever to have been published." Former U.S. Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin

In a play called *A poco hay cimarrones*, bogeyman (black costume) seeks favors from town's patron saint.

Lee and Petul Santis, working at group's office in San Cristóbal de las Casas, create mask for a new play.

Most works produced by Sna Jtz'ibajom, a cooperative that runs Lo'il Maxil, are based on Mayan folklore.

Anthropologist Robert Laughlin, an adviser to the organization, visits a cemetery in nearby Zinacantán.

called it a waste of money and gave his famous "Golden Fleece" award to the Smithsonian for having subsidized it. Proxmire complained about spending tax dollars to translate "an obscure and unwritten Mayan language spoken by 120,000 corn-farming peasants in southern Mexico." Newspaper accounts noted that the Tzotzils themselves couldn't use the dictionary because they neither read nor wrote their spoken language. Actually, they were only repeating the lament Laughlin himself made in the introduction.

What Proxmire didn't realize, and Laughlin was still only dimly perceiving, was that the Maya were even then regaining an interest in reading and writing their languages. Their ancestors, after all, were one of only two civilizations in the ancient Americas to develop a true writing system, as early as 100 B.C. (Recent discoveries confirm that the Olmecs, who lived farther north, also could write.) The Maya used hieroglyphics that contemporary students have been deciphering with increasing success from the carved stone at ruins like Palenque in Mexico, Tikal in Guatemala, Copán in Honduras, and the other 200 or so cities they built. They also had thousands of books, made of strips of bark folded accordion-fashion. Only a handful survived the bonfires of the conquering Spaniards, who were intent on extirpating native education.

In the centuries following the conquest, the Maya were denigrated and oppressed. As recently as the 1970s, they were still expected to step into the gutter to make way for *mestizos* (persons of mixed European and Indian ancestry) using the sidewalks of San Cristóbal, and even now they are considered second-class citizens by many.

Mayan literacy preserves oral history

The first real reversal of the suppression of Mayan literacy traces to the 1930s, when President Lázaro Cárdenas sought to extend the benefits of the Mexican Revolution to the rural poor. In the following decades, Mexico's Instituto Nacional Indígenista, which works with indigenous peoples throughout the country, introduced bilingual education into the schools, in the belief that literacy in Spanish would come faster if it were taught in native languages in the primary grades. Thus, a potential audience had slowly been building for material in Tzotzil, Tzeltal and about 30 other Mayan languages. Laughlin's dictionary contributed a standardized template for writing down the Mayan sounds.

When Sna Jtz'ibajom began tape-recording and transcribing local oral traditions, it discovered a wealth of history dating back centuries, as in precolonial accounts of visits by Aztec merchants from central Mexico to Zinacantán, and the exploits of Zinacantán's

Queen Xok prepares to sacrifice herself to appease the gods in historical play set in classic Mayan period.

own salt merchants, who traveled throughout the region. The shadow of the Spanish conquest falls across the highlands in the account entitled "The First Soldier Arrived in Chamula." There were folktales, versions of which have been found in Mayan communities as distant as Guatemala; stories that taught a moral; descriptions and explanations of cultural traditions. Written down, edited and translated by Sna Jtz'ibajom's members, the material has been published in Tzotzil/Spanish editions and distributed in the Mayan communities, mainly through schoolchildren, who take copies home as well as use them in class. "When a story is published," says Tzyak Kusman, a 23-year-old writer-actor from Tenejapa, "it has the storyteller's name on it, so that he or she is honored in the community."

From the beginning, the group's aim has been to make the material more accessible—to widen the audience. One obstacle, right off the bat, was the fact that most of the people receiving Sna Jtz'ibajom's bilingual publications could read them only in Spanish. To encourage Mayan literacy, in 1989 Laughlin helped Sna Jtz'ibajom start a project for people who spoke but could not read Tzotzil. The students ranged in age from 10 to 60. "Their delight in seeing their spoken words written on the blackboard was contagious." With the modern alphabet and dictionary Laughlin had developed for Tzotzil, the teachers and students could employ an immense vocabulary in the classroom.

The first year, 125 students received their diplomas. Now, after three years, the total is more than 1,000. Meanwhile, the teachers have helped standardize the alphabets for Mayan languages in other parts of Chiapas, and in Guatemala, as well.

Another outgrowth of Sna Jtz'ibajom's publishing program was a traveling puppet theater. The idea was to build an audience for the group's booklets by dramatizing the stories in Mayan communities. Laughlin invited Amy Trompetter of Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theater to Chiapas to help start it, and soon the puppets became a familiar sight all over the countryside.

To spread the lore—a little monkey business

Casting about for other ways to use the material they were gathering, Sna Jtz'ibajom decided on live theater and formed a company they called Lo'il Maxil, which means "monkey business." *A poco hay cimarrones* is the second play in the group's current repertory. The first was *El haragan y el zopilote*, named for the title characters in a Mayan fable about a loafer who trades places with a turkey buzzard because he is convinced (wrongly, it turns out) that the bird's life is easier than his own. The play is filled with jokes about the man's wife slowly realizing what has happened, but concluding that even though her new hardworking husband is

In a play based on a Mayan fable about a lazy man who trades places with a buzzard, an actor elaborately costumed as the scavenger shows the loafer how to fly. The story has been told by the Maya for centuries.

accompanied by more than a whiff of carrion, at least now there's food on the table.

Both of these plays come out of the oral traditions of the Mayan communities. A third, *Herencia fatal* (Fatal Inheritance), marks the group's first foray into purely creative writing. A contemporary play about two brothers who kill their sister in a dispute over land, it is based on a recent incident in the town of Tenejapa, and like the anger of the brothers, it boils over with many of the suppressed tensions in contemporary Mayan life.

Anyone who has ever watched a piece of writing become a play on the live stage knows how arduous the process is. So how could a small group of neophyte writers, with no previous experience of theater, do well enough to place sixth out of 52 groups in Mexico's National Theater Contest in Monterrey just a year after they started? Part of the answer lies in the unique multicultural mosaic of San Cristóbal.

When Graham Greene wrote about San Cristóbal de las Casas in the 1930s, he found only two foreigners besides the friends he was visiting—"a German bank manager and his wife." Things have changed. San Cristóbal has become a magnet for 20th-century wanderers from all over the world. Its combination of Indian cultures, Spanish architecture, beautiful scenery, clear, crisp air, and an atmosphere of spirituality grounded in the very landscape draws and holds visitors, particularly those with an artistic bent, or who think they're bent that way. Anachronisms abound. Ancient Indian women, the tumplines on their foreheads supporting heavy loads of fragrant firewood, shuffle along past walls glowing with the Mexican palette of blue, aquamarine and hot pink, past coffeeshops where cappuccino machines sputter furiously for a polyglot clientele.

The same cultural combination drives the theater group. Its Mayan members not only act in the plays but gather the material or come up with the stories to be staged. Francisco Alvarez, a multitalented Mexican from the capital who moved to San Cristóbal to work with the Maya, writes the first drafts of the plays in Spanish. Alvarez, who learned English so he could understand the songs of the Beatles, gained experience

Patrick Breslin, who works on Latin American projects, has written a book called Development and Dignity. *He last wrote for* SMITHSONIAN *on Irish oral traditions.*

Folklore is the specialty of puppet theater, Mayan cooperative's first venture into the performing arts. In *What's Man Like?*, a jaguar finds itself trapped. The group also performs works on modern issues, including alcoholism.

in the theater while he worked at a Mexico City hotel. Anthropologists like Laughlin and other foreigners have been instrumental in lining up external support, including a gray-bearded New York theater director named Ralph Lee.

As rehearsals began last year for *Herencia fatal*, Lee led Lo'il Maxil's actors through a series of loosening-up exercises. The actors, five men and three women, were bent at the waist, their arms sweeping the floor, looking like elephants snuffling after peanuts. Soon, they moved on to voice exercises, opening their mouths wide, sticking their tongues out. Lee began to make sounds—grunts, whinnies, snorts, wheezes, vibratos. The actors imitated him. Then they started doing improvisations. One man imitated a monkey loping along with its hands touching the ground. Two of the women, Chave and Petu' Krus Krus, threw hysterical fits.

Lee worked for five years in New York City with Joseph Chaikin's Open Theater, which eschewed elaborate sets and relied on the actors' ability to create a world on the stage. He now directs the Mettawee River Company, in upstate Salem, in outdoor shows based on the myths and legends of cultures from around the world. The search for new material eventually put him in touch with Laughlin, who invited him to Chiapas to help out with the fledgling theater group.

"It was my first time south of the border. I didn't have the slightest idea what to expect," recalls Lee, who spoke no Spanish. So he reached back to the Open Theater's improvisational exercises as a way to begin. "They were stiff at first. Now they're more playful. But even early on, there were these explosions of laughter. When that happens, you know that people are engaged on some level."

Some of them didn't engage immediately. Petu', a native of Zinacantán, only reluctantly took exercises when she joined the troupe. But now, she's a full participant, and both in the improvisations and onstage—she plays the outspoken and eventually murdered sister in *Herencia fatal*—her fiery feminist independence fuels her performances.

"The people in this group," Lee says, "are functioning almost entirely from intuition. I want them to play the character in a real way, and not reach for something that's overwrought, that's not theirs. So I try to give them concrete things to hang on to, something physical to do. If the moves people make onstage are natural, the reality comes out of that."

So, at the beginning of *Cimarrones*, Chave scrubs the laundry. In *Herencia fatal* the actors are always busy: passing around ceremonial drinks of *posh*, a potent sugarcane brew, during the father's wake; preparing the corpse for burial; lighting candles required by the *curandero*, or shaman.

The plays offer a variety of glimpses into the Mayan world, past and present, but *Herencia fatal*, being contemporary, is perhaps the most revealing. It opens with a curing ceremony that shows the shaman at work. When the play had its premiere in San Cristóbal last year, Antzelmo Peres Peres, a member of the troupe, sat backstage with the rest of the cast. Peres, a founder of the writers' group and a longtime informant working with Laughlin, is also a full-fledged shaman in Zinacantán. He couldn't resist walking around to the front

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of the curtain and watching the curing scene from the side, just to make sure things were done correctly.

Curing ceremonies are common in Chiapas. Curing means something more profound in Mayan culture than treating an illness. The shaman is not a doctor. Nor is he really a religious figure. "He's a lawyer," Laughlin says. "He pleads the person's cause to the gods. And he tries to restore harmony." Problems like illness arise when the harmony of the natural and the supernatural world is disturbed. "You call the shaman to restore the harmony. Once that's done, illnesses and other problems take care of themselves." Of course, you can wait too long to call the shaman. That's what the grieving sisters are told in *Herencia fatal* when the aged father dies despite the shaman's intercession.

There are glimpses, too, of the social, political and economic pressures the Maya face. Telex, the murderous brother, is greedy for the portion of his father's land left to his sisters. But Telex's greed, and his barely contained rage, grow out of the trap he's in. His only hope to rise in the world is to somehow acquire more land than he has. The population of the townships continues to grow, but the arable land is finite. Something has to give.

What pushes Telex over the edge is one sister's defiance. And there, too, the play mirrors contemporary society, in which some Mayan women are finding alternatives to their traditional roles. When the sister—played by Petu'—brandishes a thick stick from the fire at her threatening brother and tells him that she can live quite nicely on her land and her weaving, without taking orders from him or a husband, her defiance seems to spring directly from the actor's own finely honed sense of independence. Petu' lives in traditional Zinacantán, where she is raising a son on her own. She commutes daily to San Cristóbal, and wears traditional clothing only when she is acting.

Cultural changes rumble like earthquakes

Petu' is not alone in her striving for independence. Amber Post, an American writer who makes her home in Chiapas and worked with Sna Jtz'ibajom in its early days, says she knows several women artisans and weavers, all single, all in their 30s, who don't want to get married, yet still live in the traditional communities. "They say if they were married, their husbands wouldn't let them go to San Cristóbal, and they insist on going because their economic independence rests on their ability to sell their products, to take part in workshops to learn new techniques."

This is one of many changes rumbling like earthquakes under contemporary Mayan society. Still, the pull of the traditional life is strong. Maryan Lopis Mentes plays the police officer who brings the murderous brothers to justice in *Herencia fatal.* Every day, he leaves the Sna Jtz'ibajom office where he works as a writer and illustrator and walks into the surrounding hills, still dressed in modern slacks, sport shirt and V-necked sweater. An hour later, dressed in poncho, white cotton trousers and leather sandals, he is sitting at his hearth in a brick house on a steep hillside in Chamula, a township of some 60,000 Tzotzil speakers he served as president not too long ago. Green corn clings to the slopes from his house down to a creek, and harvested corn hangs from the ceiling above him in multicolored rows ten ears wide. From dusk to dawn he lives the life his people have lived for centuries. He and his wife, Roxa, burn herbs and pine needles in a pottery chalice as they pray before a wooden cross on a green table against the back wall of the house. Their daughters slap balls of corn masa into tortillas for dinner, and awake early the next morning to grind the corn they've left cooking overnight in the embers for the breakfast tortillas.

The traditional life rests on the willingness of the women to perform the traditional tasks. On his morning walk down to San Cristóbal, Maryan ponders whether his daughters could act in Sna Jtz'ibajom's plays. "I don't see how," he finally says. "A traditional

woman wouldn't have the necessary education. To get it, she would have to lose the traditions." Yet, his women colleagues in the acting company are moving away from the hearth while still expressing respect for the Mayan traditions.

Highland Chiapas is changing. A sense of longing for the past comes out often from those who know the Maya best. "When we first came here," Robert Laughlin says one evening, "there were pine trees along all these roads that are bare now. The fences used to be of elderberry or cornstalks or oak branches, not barbed wire. And now the women use a detergent, not the natural soap they once used, to wash their hair. Their hair no longer glistens like it did. It used to be so marvelously blue-black."

But the past is not coming back, and so Sna Jtz'ibajom deals with the tensions by blending their people's myths and stories with modern theater techniques. The key is that the people choose the blend. Otherwise, those cultural earthquakes may shake them to pieces. "It's a tricky business, this straddling of the two cultures," says Laughlin's wife, Mimi. "It can drive you to drink. Or the theater can be a path, a way to represent their culture but also cope with all the changes. They will still be Mayans in the 21st century."

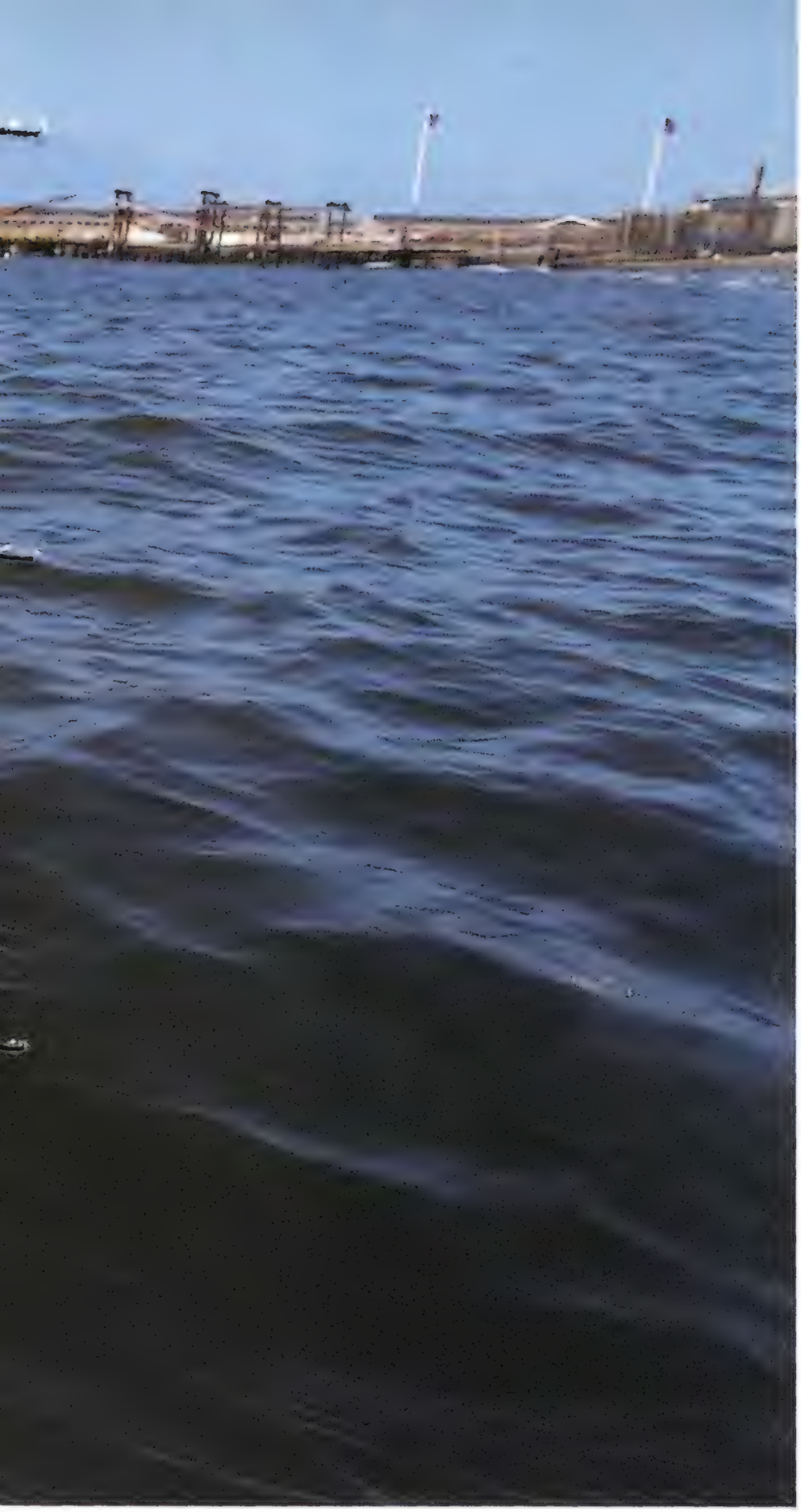
Maryan Lopis Mentes, president of Sna Jtz'ibajom, is also group's book illustrator. He rehearses with prop (above) and makes seven-mile journey home (below).

By Richard Wolkomir

Frisco's 'baykeeper' has had it up to here with polluters

Mike Herz heads a gutsy group of volunteer watchdogs who are determined to protect what remains of the San Francisco Bay ecosystem

Photographs by Felix Rigau



"Mangled!" says Mike Herz. He has hoisted the outboard motor on his cruiser out of the water, and he is staring at the dripping prop. It looks nibbled. "We hit something," he says. He had been roaring across San Francisco Bay to check out a report about a dog that had jumped into the water near a "sanitary" landfill and jumped right out, yipping and scratching wildly at its belly. Now Herz's boat, the *BayKeeper*, is dead in the water.

Six marine-radio calls later, the disabled vessel is in a repair yard and Herz is being driven back to San Francisco by Tom Belton, a computer consultant from Belvedere. Belton is taking time off from his business to give Herz a ride. "I'm concerned about the bay," he shrugs, driving over the Golden Gate Bridge, through fog and sun. "I offered myself and my boat, and I've already taken people out to check on contamination from marinas."

Belton's fidgety passenger is the self-appointed "keeper" of San Francisco Bay. He's a short, skinny pollution vigilante with a PhD in physiological psychology who stalks scofflaws in a 26-foot converted fishing boat. But Mike Herz is not alone. Behind him is a gung-ho group of volunteers like Tom Belton—300 sailors, birders, windsurfers, fishermen, dockworkers, corporate VIPs and binocular-wielding retirees. They are all angry over the decline of San Francisco Bay (including San Pablo Bay), which comprises 550 square miles of seriously troubled water, an area roughly half the size of Rhode Island.

Keepers are finding new homes

Citizens elsewhere are equally upset over the trashing of *their* waterways. And "keeperism" is spreading. Keepers now patrol the Hudson River (where the idea began in 1983), Maine's Casco Bay, Long Island Sound, the New York-New Jersey harbor, the Delaware River and Puget Sound. Herz recently coached Alaskans who hope to clone his program in the Aleutian Islands.

When Belton drops him at his office on the end of a pier in San Francisco, Herz tells his staff of four: "I'm a grumpy sailor." He makes a beeline for his telephone, past recycling bins, banged-together filing cubbyholes and a phalanx of donated computers. Hanging crookedly on the walls are awards—from the National Environmental Awards Council, California Marine Mammals Center, the U.S. Committee for the UN Environment Programme. Also tacked up is a thank-you note from Alaska governor Steve Cowper for Herz's help as a member of the Alaska Oil Spill Commission, formed in the aftermath of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.

Herz impatiently punches numbers into his telephone. Peering through his grimy picture windows at passing tankers, pelicans and Alcatraz Island, he talks to potential boat lenders. He also calls the boatyard and finds out the *BayKeeper* has thrown a rod. Another call: insurance will cover repairs. Elated, he calls a regulatory agency to check on a case. He ends up angrily slamming down the receiver. "This is classic!" he fumes.

A defunct pesticide factory on the shoreline in Richmond has impregnated the soil with DDT. "It's the biggest Superfund site in San Francisco Bay," Herz says. "The DDT is leaching, the company's being made to clean up the site by the Environmental Protection

Potential problems Herz and his cohorts keep tabs on include a deserted waterfront building (left). Such structures may leak hazardous substances into the bay.

Agency, but they ran out of money, so the DDT just sits there, and we've noticed dredges docked by the plant." Herz wants to know if a dredging permit has been issued. Dredging could stir up the DDT.

"After ten phone calls, we still don't know whether they have a permit, and whether it's for dredging or off-loading, or what," he grumbles. "It's typical. Things that set off alarm bells for us are just more paperwork to the bureaucracy."

Herz sees himself as a pugnacious sardine going up against rule-flouting sharks. The sharks once polluted with impunity, because enforcement agencies don't have adequate resources to patrol the bay. But now things are changing:

- A BayKeeper patrol spotted a San Francisco shipyard discharging toxic paint and sandblasting wastes into the bay. Water samples taken by volunteers indicated heavy-metals levels hazardous to fish. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board forced the yard to spend several hundred thousand dollars to eliminate its pollution.
- A tipster reported raw sewage spilling onto a beach through a pipe at Horseshoe Cove, in Sausalito. The beach in question is part of a national recreation area. Herz called the National Park Service and within hours the leaking sewage line was plugged.
- Responding to an anonymous tip, a volunteer found more than 100 drums of solvents, bilge oil and paint on San Francisco's Hyde Street Pier, where historic ships are berthed. Dead gulls were lying on the adjacent beach. Herz's reports to the city's health department and the district attorney led to removal and proper disposal of the wastes.

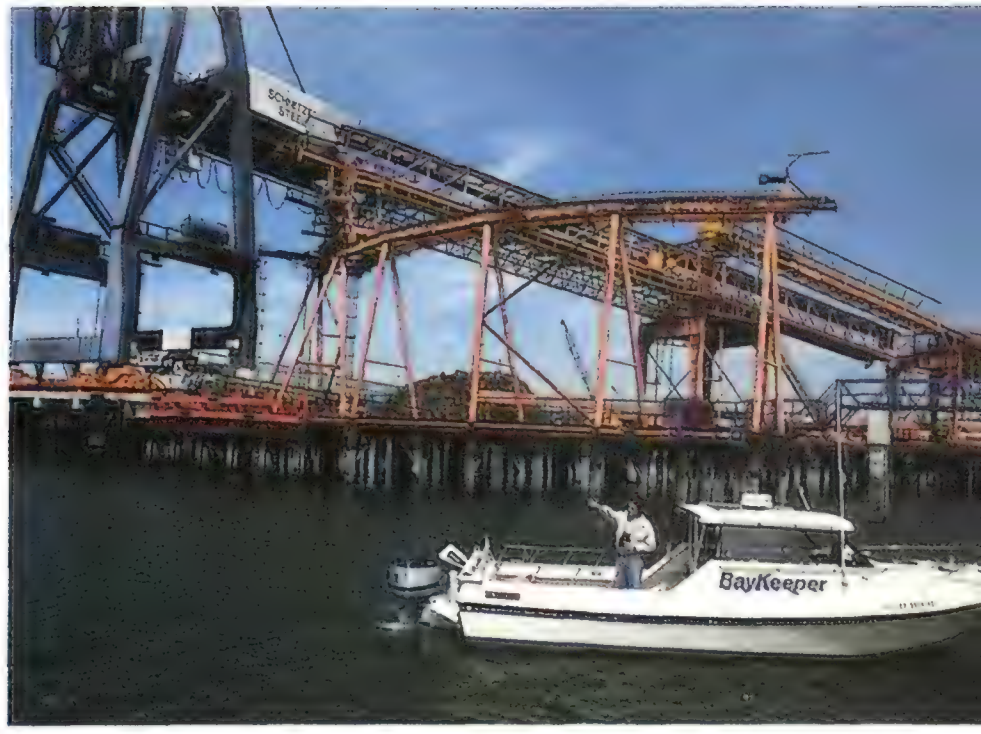
These are just three investigations out of hundreds over the past three years that have led to a significant reduction of pollution in the bay. Now BayKeeper—the official name of Herz's operation—has other leads to pursue, but the search for a substitute craft is not going well. Herz decides to check out a Sausalito marina for reported sewage leaks using his own 35-foot sloop.

Once, Herz sailed his sloop to Hawaii, solo. He got lost in a storm and nearly missed the islands. He recalls it now not as a disaster but as a "high."

When he was 10 years old, Herz discovered at a YMCA camp that he had a passion for water. "The director called my parents and told them, 'This kid won't do anything but sail!' " An only child, he grew up in a Minneapolis suburb. His father was a school dropout who became a successful publisher of medical magazines. His mother, 85, is a serious bird-watcher. Herz is a blend of his father's intensity, his mother's keenness for wildlife and his own water mania.

Before he became a baykeeper, he was a brain researcher. After earning his doctorate at the University of Southern California, he studied the effects of toxins on the nervous systems of fish and sea anemones at UCLA's Brain Research Institute. Fifteen years later,

Mr. Wolkomir has written most recently about American Sign Language, user-unfriendly electronic gadgets and the mobile robot project at MIT.



Dredging (above) can mean trouble, and so can bayside industrial plants. Scott Rouillard (right) points out where a steel plant illegally dumped scrap-metal debris.

he was a dissatisfied professor at the University of California, San Francisco. "I'm too impatient to be a good basic researcher," he admits. Besides, he missed the water. "In 1972, I took a one-year leave and I'm still on it," he says.

In 1973, he helped start the San Francisco chapter of the Oceanic Society. By 1977 he was executive vice president of the National Oceanic Society. He founded its water-quality laboratory, which used volunteers' boats and planes for the monitoring and surveillance of San Francisco Bay. It was a precursor of the BayKeeper program. Next Herz became a scientist at San Francisco State University, studying California water problems and oil-spill cleanup technologies.

Five years ago, Herz met John Cronin, the keeper of the Hudson River. Cronin's operation was established by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association. "I got all excited," says Herz. He decided San Francisco Bay needed a similar watchdog program, but one based more on citizen volunteers.

San Francisco Bay, about 60 miles long, is the West Coast's largest estuary. It drains nearly 40 percent of California and contains 90 percent of the state's remaining coastal wetlands. However, as U.S. Geological Survey scientists have put it: "San Francisco Bay is today considered the major estuary in the United States most modified by human activity."

Prior to 1848, San Francisco was a sleepy little village with fewer than a thousand souls. After the gold rush its population exploded, and the impact on the city's surroundings was tremendous. Fishermen harvested the bay's Dungeness crabs, shrimp, salmon, sturgeon and flatfish to feed hungry forty-niners. Entrepreneurs stocked the bay with alien Eastern species, like striped bass and American shad. With the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s came shipments of live Eastern oysters for fattening in the bay. With the oysters came pests, like oyster drills. Today about 20 species of fish and 100 species of invertebrates in the bay are aliens that compete with native species.

Overfishing is contributing to the decline of native and introduced species alike. So are ever-increasing discharges of sewage and industrial wastes, along with millions of tons of sediments from hydraulic gold mining. Settlers filled in marshes to create land for farms and houses. Only 6 percent of the original wetlands is left. The bay itself has shrunk by one-third. About seven million people live around it and nearly 200 industries and municipalities have permits to discharge wastes into it. Each year as much as 185 tons of toxic trace metals and 30,000 tons of hydrocarbon runoff from auto emissions on urban streets end up in the bay.

The diversion of river water to agriculture has changed the bay's ratio of salt water to fresh, reduced its ability to flush out pollution and contributed to a 75 percent reduction in salmon and striped bass populations over the past 30 years. Dredges scoop up about seven million cubic yards of sediments each year from marinas and shipping channels, increasing turbidity and stirring up toxic materials. Add to all of this the fact that more than a thousand oil tankers pass under

"Captain Nabber," one of Baykeeper's more intrepid activists, checks out a rusty pleasure craft in kayak.

the Golden Gate annually. Each one is a potential leaker, and a devastating spill—there have been three since 1971—is a constant threat.

Largely because of the development that has transformed the Bay Area, 16 indigenous animal species are now classified as rare, endangered or threatened, from the brown pelican, the California clapper rail and the winter-run chinook salmon to the California freshwater shrimp. Yet bay lovers like Herz know there is still much to preserve. Up to half the birds migrating along the Pacific flyway winter around the bay, including pintails, mallards, tundra swans and greater sandhill cranes. It's also one of the most important shorebird reserves in the Western Hemisphere.

But Herz found that the agencies charged with enforcing the state and federal laws that are supposed to protect the bay are too understaffed and underfunded to do the job. Even the Coast Guard has no full-time pollution patrol in the area. Another key regulator is the California Water Quality Control Board. "Today it has one Boston Whaler, in near sinking condition, which an employee keeps going with money out of his own pocket," says Herz.

In 1988, he spent a lot of time surveying local environmentalists and regulators. As he expected, he learned that everyone was in favor of some kind of citizens' watchdog group. "We do almost no direct sampling of the bay," the Regional Water Quality Control Board responded. "None of the environmental laws are being adequately enforced," said the California Department of Fish and Game. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission, also understaffed, said a citizens' watchdog group "would serve as a deterrent, like a cop on the beat." The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wanted a baykeeper to check compliance with dredging permits.

By the middle of 1989, Herz had raised enough donations to buy a boat, rent an office and hire a staff. The day BayKeeper opened for business, the telephone began ringing. "That first day we had 50 incidents reported," says Herz. "For our first volunteer meeting, we hoped for 20 people and got 75."

Many of the volunteers now enrolled with BayKeeper have taken classes on water-quality laws and bacterial sampling. They watch for oil slicks, fish or bird kills, illegal filling, floating sewage, water discoloration, leaking landfills or discharges from boats. Deformed fish set off their pollution alarms. So do clams or mussels with tumors, crabs or shrimp with "burn" holes, and mutant-looking birds. Some volunteers patrol in the *BayKeeper*; others use their own boats. Many have special skills, like photography. One man volunteers his helicopter, another his airplane. A former computer-magazine editor rounds up donations of software and computers.

Scott Rouillard is BayKeeper's full-time field coordinator. A Maine transplant, he began as a volunteer. A sailor and paraglider, he had been bored with his office job. "BayKeeper looked good because it was on the water, doing things," he says.

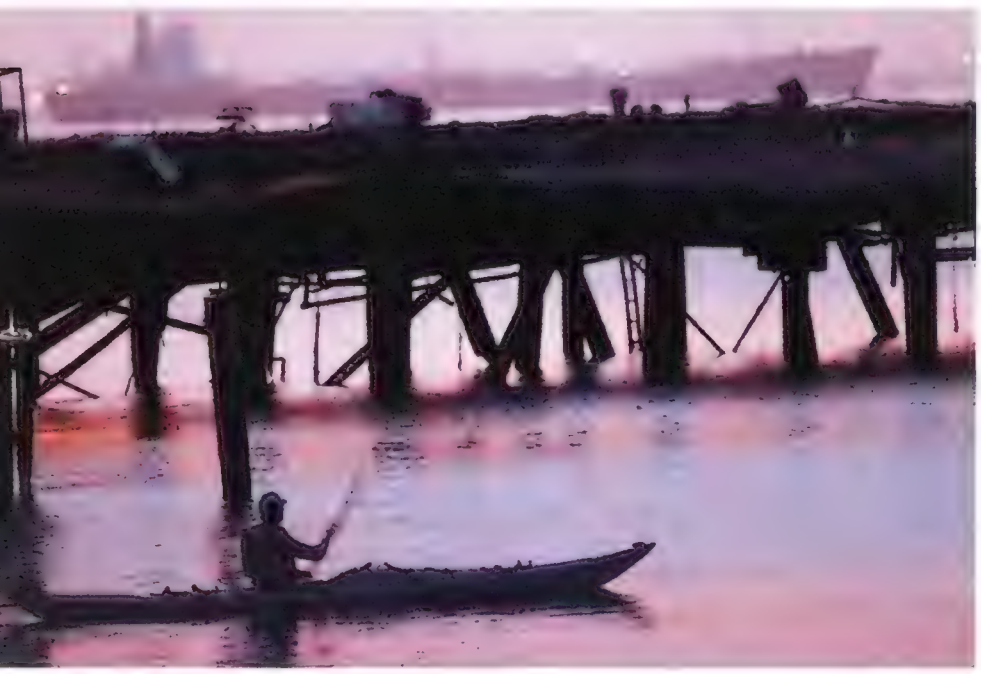
The job is not without its lighter moments. "A fisherman called one day," Rouillard says. "He reported that every Friday for a year a commercial fisherman whose boat was tied up at Pier 45 had been pumping his oily bilge water into the bay." Rouillard drove to the pier with a video camera. For an hour he videotaped the fishing boat's crew illegally pumping bilge. "They thought I was a tourist," he says. The crew actually cavorted for the camera as they sprinkled liquid detergent to disperse their oil slick. Rouillard called Mike Herz, who buzzed over in the *BayKeeper*.

"You could see the guys on the boat saying, 'Oh, no!' " Rouillard recalls.

BayKeeper gave the videotape to the Coast Guard, which paid the crew a visit. "We're checking that pier all the time now," Rouillard says, "and we haven't seen anyone else pumping."

It is a typical San Francisco afternoon, chilly and gray. Beside the Hyde Street Pier, "Captain Nabber" pushes his kayak into the water. He is tall, fortyish and mild-mannered. His nom de guerre is used here to protect his job; he's an engineer working for an industry BayKeeper watches. In his spare time, he is one of BayKeeper's most tigerish volunteers.

Nabber once allowed himself to be photographed for the BayKeeper newsletter. He is pictured at the



Pulling alongside a pier, Nabber prepares to inspect a sewer pipe (under pilings) that he once found leaking.

Army's Crissy Field, his head invisible because it is thrust into a storm drain that windsurfers had seen discharging sewage. It isn't glamorous work. "I do it because people have to make some effort to clean up after themselves, or things will just keep getting worse."

This afternoon Nabber is checking Fisherman's Wharf. In a light chop, he paddles out past a fleet of historic sailing ships resting at anchor and studies the water beside a fuel dock. He sees oil globs, but too few to warrant a fuss. At Pier 47 he glides his kayak into the dank gloom under the pilings, peering at a sewer pipe he once found dripping into the water. "Nothing bad here today," he says.

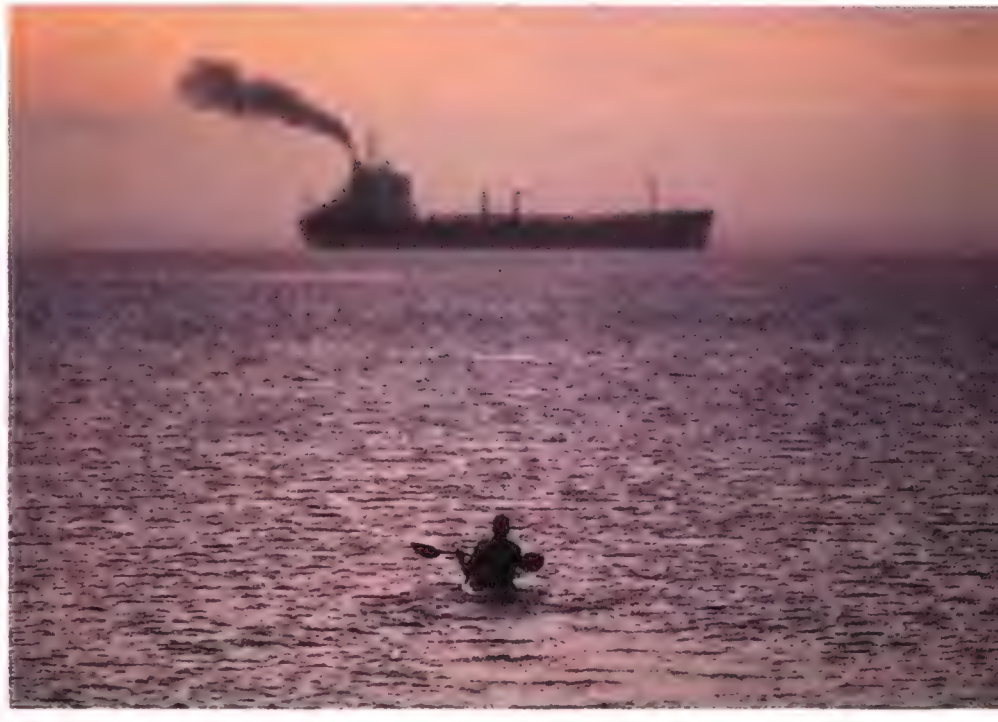
Next Nabber paddles into a channel past beat-up trawlers docked gunwale to gunwale—the *Vickie, Pavo Grande, Puggy.* At Alioto's #8 restaurant, three large sea lions bark at tourists. A male as big as Nabber's kayak surges past his bow. "They've never bothered me," he says. He glides under another wharf to eye another sewer line he once spotted leaking. He reported it to Herz, who got the Port of San Francisco to fix it. "Now I check it every so often," Nabber says.

Nabber paddles into the bay, passing a flotilla of western grebes. Rounding the tip of Pier 45, his kayak pitches in waves. He paddles alongside the pier, looking for spray-painted markers on utility pipes. "That's the first sign construction is starting," he says. "This pier was damaged in the earthquake, and they're due to rebuild it." Nabber plans to monitor the work.

Paddling back, he remembers his first volunteer assignment. It was to check a rendering plant in Richmond that boiled animal and fish parts into oils. From his kayak, he noticed a foul smell. Walking along the shore one day, he heard a gurgling sound. "Horrible gray gunk was flowing down the bank and oozing into the bay," he says. He took pictures and BayKeeper showed them to several regulatory agencies. Result: the plant is phasing out its entire operation.

Watchdogging has become an obsession with Nabber. At 7 o'clock on fog-free mornings, he drives up to the lookout on Twin Peaks, one of the city's highest spots, and checks with binoculars for tankers offloading oil without the required cleanup boat in attendance. "I also look for dredging, sand mining and scrap metal being loaded or unloaded at the Oakland docks," says Nabber. "Then Mike can check it if he thinks it needs checking."

Sometimes Nabber takes certain liberties. One recent Wednesday night he drove over the Golden Gate



Nabber watches tanker churn across the bay. Oil spills can occur during off-loading and pumping of bilge.

Bridge to a Sausalito ferry slip. A tipster had reported that a mechanic was pumping the ferry's bilge into the bay, instead of into a holding tank on the pier. Nabber intended to find out if it was true.

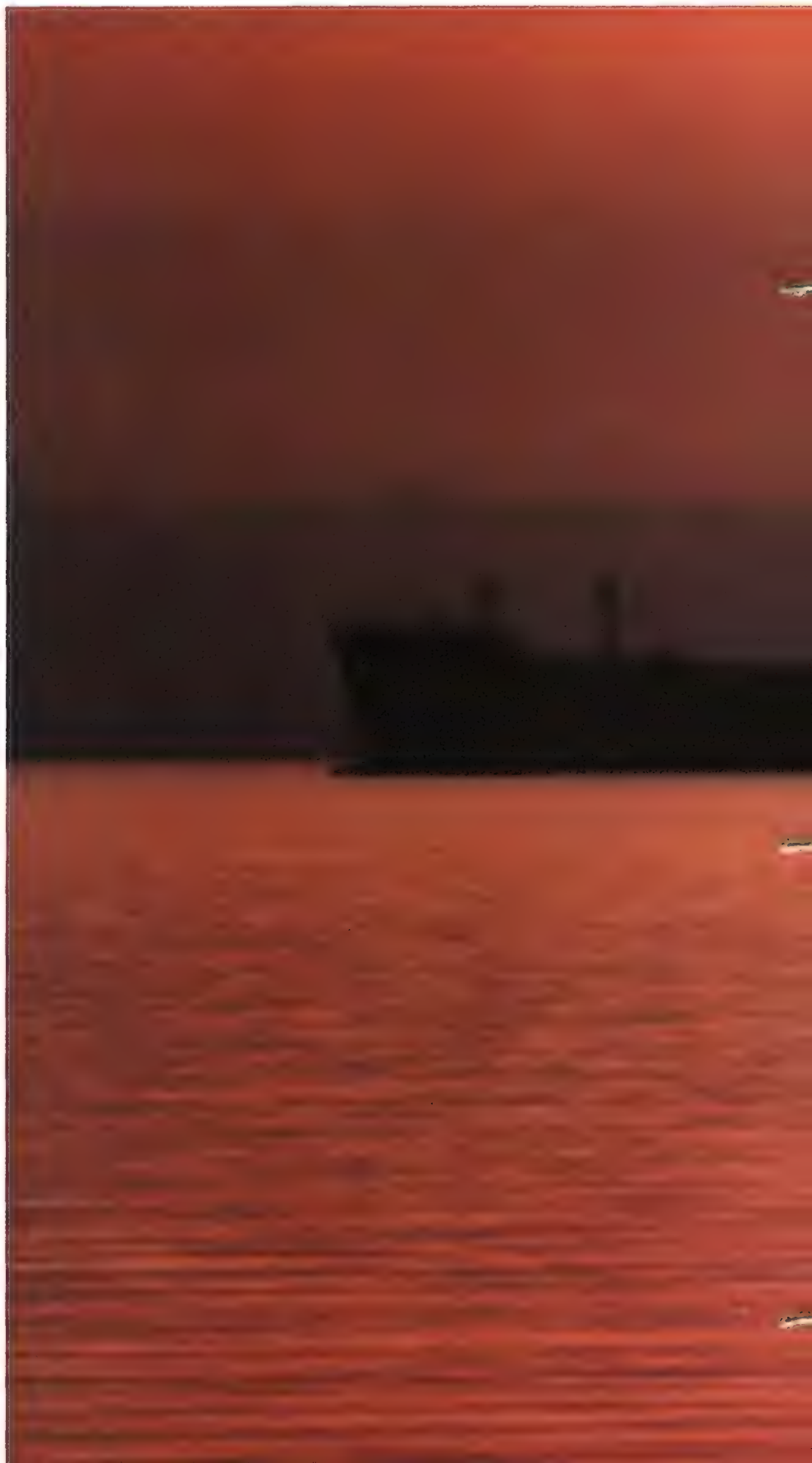
With Sausalito's windows lighting up the hills behind him, he skulked down the pier carrying a metal pole. He was trespassing. When a journalist accompanying him pointed that out, he merely shrugged. Waves slapped the pilings, and the wind smelled of kelp. The yellow holding tank, the size of a VW Beetle, was pale under a lamp. Nabber poked his pole through an opening on top, down to the bottom. Then he pulled it out to see how much was wet. "The level of liquid in the tank hasn't changed since I measured it on Monday," he said, rolling up his ruler. "If it's the same on Friday, that's evidence they're not pumping into the tank, and BayKeeper will call the ferry company."

One of Nabber's investigations became a big story in the Bay Area media. In the process, it ruffled the feathers of the agency that put BayKeeper on the case in the first place. The episode began when the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) asked BayKeeper to check out a suspicious dredging operation in a San Francisco shipyard. "I watched it from my parked pickup truck for a few days, feeling uncomfortable because it's a nasty neighborhood," says Nabber. He noticed that the dredge, seemingly idle, was anchored in a new spot every morning. He also saw odd mud piles along the shore. Samples of the mud, analyzed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, showed highly toxic levels of copper and zinc, from paints sandblasted off boat hulls. Dredging would resuspend toxic materials, making them available to fish and wildlife in the bay. And the shipyard had no dredging permit.

At night, Nabber nudged his kayak into the channel. Sure enough, there was the dredge covertly at work sucking up the bottom. BCDC issued an after-the-fact permit and levied a puny $100 fine. Mike Herz was furious. Then he got a call from a former foreman at the shipyard, who said that the illegal dredging was no mistake. He said the shipyard executives—eager for Navy contracts—decided to dredge secretly to avoid the yearlong review required for a permit. The whistleblower, a bass fisherman, said he was disgusted at seeing all the sick fish in the bay.

Herz took it to the media. One newspaper photograph showed him standing in front of the shipyard, staring through his glasses at the camera. The headline was: "Bay Agency Accused of Being Too Lax With Polluters." BCDC proposed a fine of $95,000. BayKeeper said it should be $600,000. Then the Environmental Protection Agency took over and eventually levied fines of several hundred thousand dollars. A *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist summed up the case: "It wouldn't have made it to the limelight without the laudable nosiness of BayKeeper."

Although BCDC was stung by that incident, it still values Herz's "nosiness." "BayKeeper is helpful because our presence in the field is virtually nil—we don't even have a boat," says Roberta Jones, one of the agency's two enforcement officers. "They can be pests. Mike Herz *is* BayKeeper. His personality flavors the whole thing, and his personality is very outspoken. Sometimes we feel a little beleaguered."



In the warm glow of a California sunrise, ship rests at anchor in waters not as untroubled as they appear.

Steve Ritchie, director of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, wryly asserts: "I've been quoted as saying BayKeeper is a pain in the posterior, but I've assured Mike that I only meant that he *personally* is a pain in the posterior."

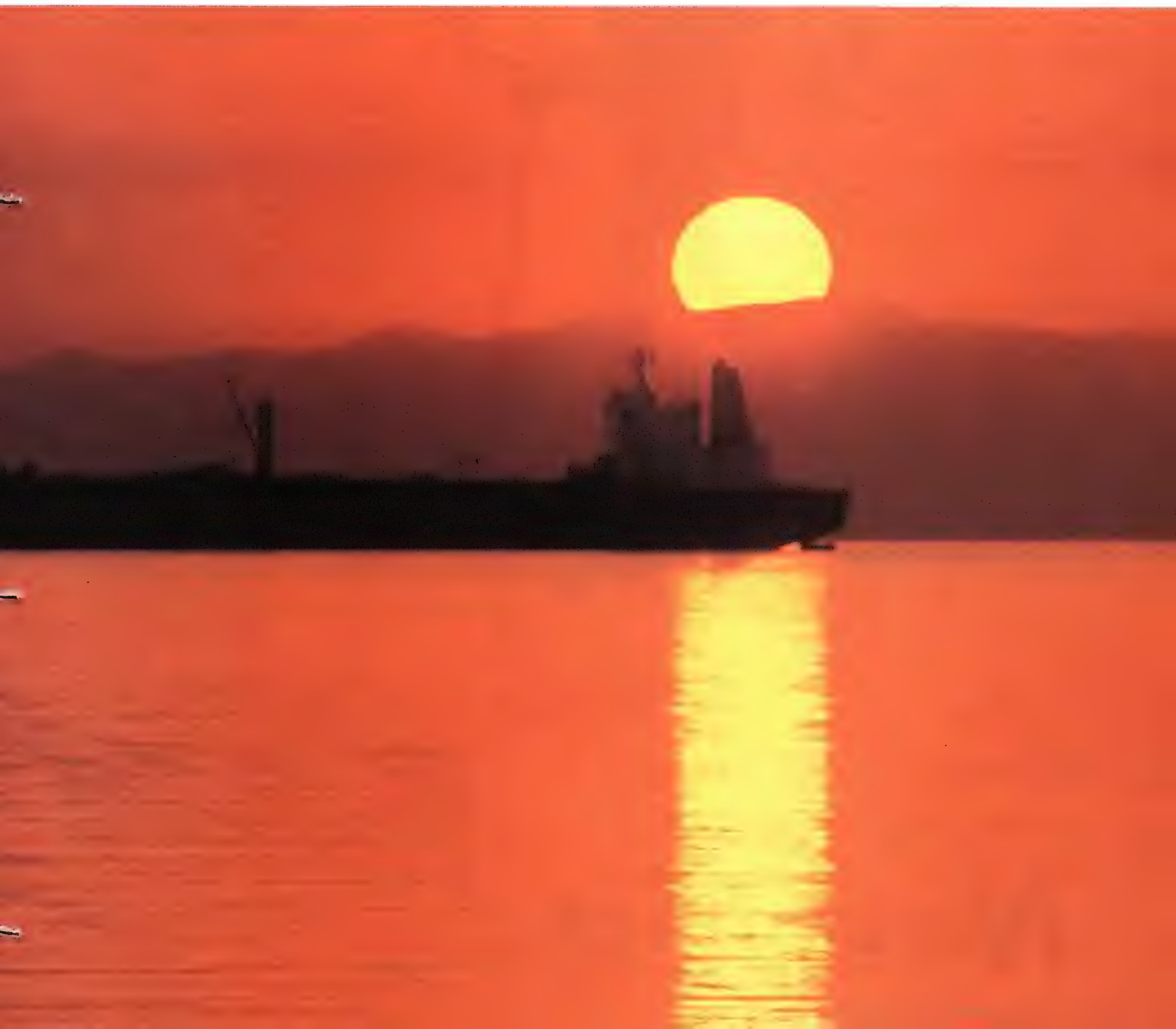
Herz is flattered. He says inflicting pain is his job. "I nibble at the agencies' heels until they do *their* job."

Ritchie says Herz underestimates the agencies. "The kinds of things they discover are litterbug things, not the scientific things we deal with, like reducing the level of copper in the bay. But it's a huge bay, and there's plenty of work for them and us."

Herz says the impoverished agencies have been reduced to "old bulldogs, with no teeth." He adds: "The only deterrence you have is *hammering* violators."

He is planning to borrow a strategy from the Hudson River keeper and bring lots of citizens' suits. Meanwhile, he dismisses the charge that BayKeeper focuses on "litterbugs." As he puts it: "Pollution in the bay is a matter of death by a thousand cuts!"

California's environmental-protection chief, James Strock, said this at a recent BayKeeper fundraiser: "Even if government funds were unlimited, private citizens' groups would be indispensable to effective environmental protection. This is a uniquely American concept." Steve Ritchie agrees that the keeper movement "bodes well for the environment." In fact, discussing Herz's operation with a visitor recently, Ritchie suddenly burst out with the ultimate accolade: "I'd like to do it myself!"



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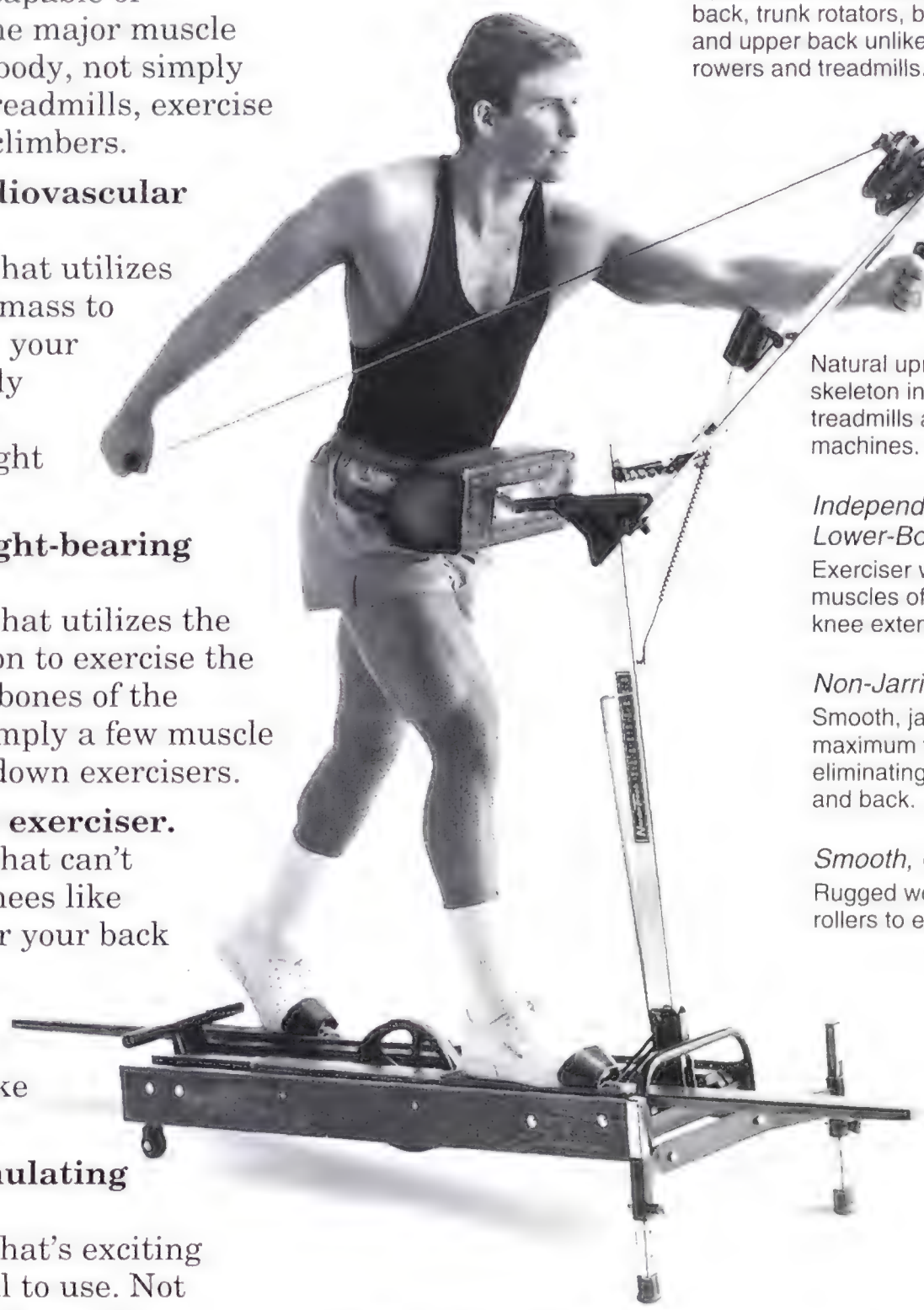

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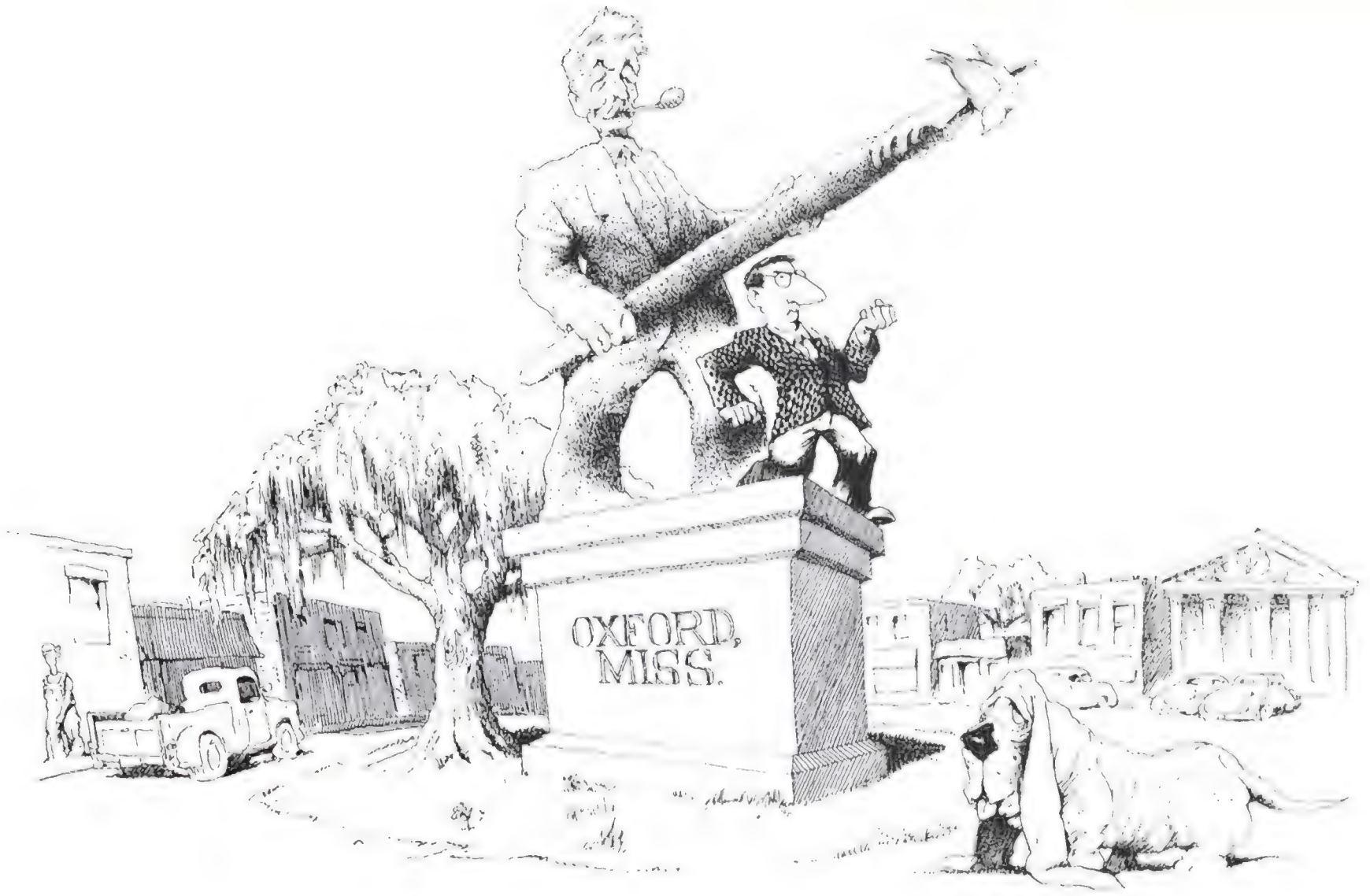

By Robert Canzoneri

Move over, Bill— I'm a Writer, too

When the author was a student in William Faulkner's town, he and the novelist had a lot to talk about, but Fate always intervened

For a few years after William Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in Literature, he and I both lived in Oxford, Mississippi. During that time I never went to the bank or store or post office without a feeling that our paths would cross—as they almost had to in so small a town—whereupon Faulkner would give a slight nod of recognition, and we'd launch into a long conversation about writing.

It was not that I was a seeker-out of celebrities. I was past that. I had recently won a college contest and become a Serious Writer myself. Unpublished, yes, but deadly, deadly Serious. Fate, you'd think, would take advantage of our proximity and make certain that the mantle was properly handed down. Some power did, in fact, seem to bring us nearer and nearer, only to deflect us, finally, with a sort of invisible force, as if we were a pair of those little magnetic Scotties that were popular when I was a kid.

Other people, of course, have taken considerable advantage of no more acquaintance than came my way. One Faulkner scholar, for example, arrived at a remarkable intimacy with "Bill" and "Estelle" just by engaging Mrs. Faulkner in a few minutes of conversation while Mr. Faulkner stood off down the fence, refusing to join in. And a couple of University of Mississippi professors apparently became friends with the writer after his death 30 years ago last month; some sort of retroactive arrangement, I suppose.

During my first year as a student in Oxford, the nearest I got to William Faulkner was to stand beside his brother John a couple of times at the urinals in the Graduate Building at Ole Miss. I had to wait for William's daughter to finish high school before I got so much as a glimpse of him.

Sitting on the fifth row in an auditorium full of people, straining to hear that faint, raspy voice deliver a graduation speech, wasn't the sort of meeting I'd had in mind. By then I had published my first short story,

Illustrations by William Bramhall

"The Railway Express agent said, 'You know what I think? I think that Faulkner's been writing this stuff and then taking it to Goatee Brown and getting him to put in the big words. What do you think?'"

and I sat there dreaming that the next day he would come across me downtown and say, "I spotted you out there in the audience, and I was hoping that I'd get a chance to tell you how very much I like that story of yours."

He didn't. But one day a year or so later I turned the corner into the town square, and there he was, wearing a ragged tweed jacket with leather elbow patches. His head was slightly tilted as though he were taking in the whole courthouse scene and transforming it yet again into his fictional Yoknapatawpha County. I felt that I could almost catch snatches of what was going on in his head, phrases like "the apotheosis of grinding justice, the avatar of annealing honor and pride . . ." I would not for the world, as a fellow Serious Writer, have touched him on the arm and said, "Uh, excuse me, Mr. Faulkner. I've been wanting to meet you . . ."

On the other hand, he might have been just trying to decide whether to step into the nearest drugstore and talk with his friend Mac Reed, or go across the square to Leslie's, where there were a few booths and a soda fountain. It was in Leslie's, a while before, that a graduate student I knew had actually spoken to him. After buying a cup of coffee, he turned to see that the only booth not full of people was one in which William Faulkner sat, alone. He hesitated, but finally walked over, motioned to the empty seat opposite Faulkner and asked if he might sit. Faulkner nodded.

They sipped coffee in silence until the student could no longer bear it. "I don't really understand your novels, Mr. Faulkner," he blurted out, "but I like your short stories a lot, and my favorites are 'House Afire' and 'Speckled Ponies.' "

When he told his wife about the encounter, she said, "You mean 'Barn Burning,' don't you? And 'Spotted Horses'?"

"Oh my God," the student said.

"Well," she asked impatiently, "what did he say?"

"He said, 'Thank you.' "

It was not long before I had completed a whole entire novel, written wholly and entirely by me. Back then, the best way to send a book off for a publisher to reject was by Railway Express. "Reverently" probably best characterizes the way I handed the manuscript to the agent. He weighed the package, then asked, "This is a novel, isn't it?"

"Yes," I said.

"You interested in Faulkner?"

I told him that I was.

"Did you ever read anything he wrote?" the agent continued.

I nodded.

"Did you notice the big words?"

I said that I had, indeed, noticed the big words.

"Where do you reckon he gets them?" he said. "You know he only went to the university a few months. Where do you reckon he gets them?"

I confessed ignorance.

The agent looked at me knowingly. "You know what I think?" he said.

Here I have to go into what a friend of mine used to call a tributary. A well-known Oxford resident had just died, a man known as Goatee Brown. He had been a professor of English at Ole Miss until the early '30s, when he was fired, apparently because he wouldn't keep regular hours.

Brown had stayed in Oxford for the remaining quarter-century or so of his life, unemployed, though it was known that he was an occasional reader for publishers of books in American literature. He sat up all night reading in the Mansion, a restaurant also frequented by Faulkner. When one of my fellow students needed an article on Thomas Wolfe that was missing from the library, someone told him: "Goatee Brown will have it. Borrow his."

The student did, and he showed me Brown's notes in the margin. Wolfe's descriptive powers in *Look Homeward, Angel* were under discussion, and beside a quote that went something like "the slam of a screen door, the smell of turnip greens," Brown had penciled in, "God, what a rich full life he must have lived!"

So, anyway, the Railway Express agent said, "You know what I think? I think Faulkner's been writing this stuff and then taking it down to Goatee Brown and getting him to put

The author lives in Ohio, but he grew up in Mississippi. He writes novels and short stories, as well as nonfiction.

in the big words." He watched for my reaction. "What do you think?"

I said that I didn't know.

He nodded, with an air of satisfaction. "Well, Brown is dead," he said, "so we'll find out now, won't we!"

For some reason or other, the drugstore I traded at was not Leslie's but Gathright-Reed across the square. Mr. Reed, a very soft-voiced, gentle man, had known Faulkner long before he became a literary figure. He spotted my interest immediately and would tell me little tidbits about him from time to time. Once he said, "Bill gave me a copy of his new book," and opened *Requiem for a Nun* to Faulkner's inscription.

"I probably won't read it," he went on. "It's not my kind of book. Bill knows that, and I appreciate his giving it to me." He shook his head. "There was a time when Bill was writing good stories, for the *Saturday Evening Post*. I always hoped he would go on that way. But he had to go his own way, and I respect that."

Toward the end of my few years in Oxford, I went into the drugstore one day for aspirin or a prescription. As soon as I stepped in the door, I saw Faulkner standing across the cash register from Mr. Reed, talking, and I stopped cold.

I stood there thinking, Should I? Not long before, I had been driving along Old Taylor Road when I overtook Faulkner walking toward home. He carried a cane or a stick, and he was dressed in his old tweed coat. My first thought had been, Offer him a ride. I decided that if he wanted a ride he'd be thumbing one, not walking along intent upon the ground. He seemed to be lost in writing something like " 'What!' he cried. 'What?' Outraged, immobile, impotent in the furious immobility of the very twilight and burdened evensong of impotence deified, incarnated, crucified, unrisen."

But he couldn't be writing now; he was in conversation. It was on pure drugstore business that I would approach, not him, but the cash register, whereupon Mr. Reed would introduce us. I don't think I ever got to the point of thinking, Now is it "House Burning"? Or is it "Barn Afire"? I was too blank for that. I'm not sure, either, how long I stood there before I noticed that my hands were trembling. I suppose I took that as a sign; in any case, I turned and walked out.

If I had taken those few extra steps, what a difference it might have made. All these years, I might have been looked upon with awe as I broached amusing little reminiscences with, "The last time I talked to Bill . . ."

Still, self-abnegation brings its own blessings. Ever since I had the courtesy not to intrude upon Faulkner, I have found myself associated with him in oddly intimate ways. It really does seem that Fate wished to reward me, when I consider that I had the good fortune to be hospitalized with a case of flu just down the hall from his sister-in-law when she died, that a well-known younger writer once publicly attributed to me a sentence of Faulkner's that I had quoted to her a few years before, and that I was lucky enough to marry a girl who had been bitten by one of his dogs. "God," Goatee Brown might well have noted in the margin, "what a rich full life!"

"He seemed to be lost in writing something like '"What!" he cried. "What?" Outraged, . . . impotent in the furious immobility of the very twilight and burdened evensong of impotence deified, incarnated....'"

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By Bil Gilbert

Crows fly far and wide, but there's no place like home

During the day, flocks of crows journey miles in search of food. In the evening, they return to the same roosting places. Why?

American crows are probably the most frequently met and easily identifiable members of our native fauna. The great number of tales, legends and myths about these birds indicates that people have been exceptionally interested in them for a long time. On the other hand, when it comes to substantive, particularly behavioral, information, crows are less well known than many comparably common species and for that matter, not a few quite uncommon ones—the endangered California condor, to cite one obvious example. There are practical reasons for this.

Crows are notoriously poor and aggravating subjects for field research. Keen observers and quick learners, they are astute about the intentions of other creatures, including would-be students, and adept at avoiding them. Because they are so numerous, active and monochromatic, it is difficult to distinguish one crow from another. Bands, radio transmitters or other identifying devices can be attached to them but this of course requires catching live crows, who are among the wariest and most untrappable of animals.

Many naturalists think the best recent study was made by Lawrence Kilham, Professor Emeritus at the Dartmouth Medical School and a distinguished microbiologist and ornithologist. He unobtrusively hung around several families of crows for some 8,000 hours: the birds eventually learned he was harmless, and he learned to identify them individually by minute differences in plumage, conformation and behavior.

Technical and financial difficulties aside, crow research is daunting because the ways of these birds are so complex and various. As preeminent generalists, members of this species ingeniously exploit a great range of habitats and resources, and they can quickly adjust to changes in their circumstances. Being so educable, individual birds have markedly different interests and inclinations, strategies and scams. For example, crows have been known to hang around ice fishermen, waiting patiently for them to leave their tips untended. When this happens, the birds pull the lines out of the water, deftly remove baits from hooks and eat them. I

am personally acquainted with a pet crow that learned how to let a dog out of its kennel by pulling the pin on the door. When the dog escaped, the bird went into the kennel and ate its food.

This same pair occasionally hunted together, with the bird clearly being the chief beneficiary and, seemingly, the strategist. The crow, Churchill by name, now and then found a chipmunk and was able to so harass it that the confused rodent would leave the safety of a rock pile and dart into the open yard, where the dog sometimes was able to catch and kill it. Churchill would then contrive to take the defunct chipmunk from the dog and carry it off to a place where he could enjoy the catch without sharing. Many crows have learned to bamboozle and rob predators who are much more formidable than domestic dogs. Lawrence Kilham, for example, observed members of crow families collectively tormenting otters, sometimes boldly pulling their tails, so that one of them could steal fish parts from the distracted mammals.

Crows also have a great variety of idiosyncratic interests that are probably best described as recreational. Where I live there is a large, smooth boulder that rises at about a 30-degree angle from a creek. During the past 25 years, a half-dozen crows have shared these premises with us. Two of them became addicted to sliding down this rock on their rumps into the water. They did so like children on a sliding board, making a run, then scrambling back to the top to do it again. In the proper mood they would keep at this exercise for ten minutes or so and repeat it several times a day. A few years ago there was a report from Moscow that the crow population of the city was increasing and some members of it were causing a problem. It seems that a number of crows had commenced sliding down the golden domes of churches on their fannies, rubbing the gilt off those historic landmarks.

As the sun rises, so do some 75,000 crows at Hagerstown, Maryland, roost. Birds have already moved from scrub near shopping mall to staging area in trees.

Beyond the usual quantitative information about sizes, diets, distribution and such, crows, like people, cannot be known generally. All descriptions and judgments about them are necessarily parochial, limited to what some crows, sometimes, in some places have been known to do. One aspect of their behavior that nicely exemplifies this qualifier is communal roosting, which for years has struck me as an especially thought-provoking aspect of the culture of crows.

A roost is a small place, usually a few wooded acres, where each day late in the afternoon during the fall and winter sizable flocks of crows gather. There they spend the night perched closely together. Each morning they leave the roost, fanning out in small groups to hunt and scavenge. In some cases individual birds will fly as far as 80 miles, commuting daily between their roosts and their foraging grounds. According to direct observation and the rather scanty literature on the subject, crow roosts vary in population from a few hundred to more than a million birds. These congregations occur throughout most if not all of the breeding range of the species which, except for especially

Naturalist and writer Bil Gilbert is a founding member of the American Society of Crows and Ravens.

arid or mountainous regions, includes all of North America south of central Canada. However, roosts are most numerous and generally larger in the mid-latitudes of the United States between the 30th and 40th parallels.

For the past five years I have been watching, and exchanging information and speculating about, crow roosts in the central valleys of the Potomac and Susquehanna rivers with several dozen friends, neighbors and family members. We are all members of the American Society of Crows and Ravens, an informal, nationwide network of students and admirers of the species. Our attention has focused on

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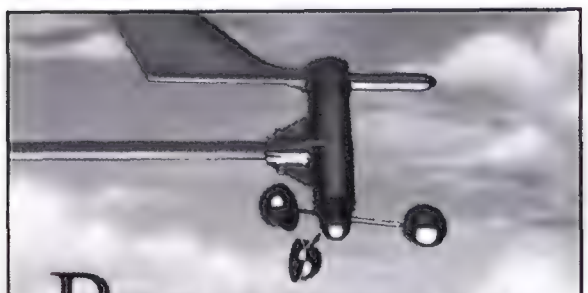

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nine roosts scattered between the metropolitan Baltimore-Washington area and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The largest of these roosts is used by about 100,000 birds; the smallest has a winter population of perhaps 5,000.

The lives of crows proceed according to an annual cycle that has no true beginning or end. But to place roosting behavior in context, midspring, say early May, makes a convenient arbitrary starting point. At that time in these parts there are basically two functional classes of crow: wandering individuals and small, loosely associated flocks of birds, who because of age or for other reasons, do not have direct reproductive responsibilities; and second, members of crow families consisting of a mated couple and several nonbreeding birds. The latter assist the pair in building nests, defending territories and feeding hatchlings. These helpers remain associated with the same nuclear pair for several years, and during this period, Kilham writes in his *The American Crow and the Common Raven*, they "gain experience in interactions with associates that may be older or younger, dominant or subordinate." This apprentice period is imperative, Kilham thinks, because it takes a lot of time for "an intelligent and social animal, whether a crow or a primate, to learn the complex life of its species."

In late summer, after the young of the year are self-sufficient, families or individual members of them may join flocks of unattached nonbreeding birds and migrate south—sometimes, according to banding records, traveling at least 600 miles—to become members of large roosting communities. Again the some-do, some-don't caveat applies. Some crows continue to use their summer territories and do not join the community roost.

All areas that attract migrant winter flocks also support permanent populations of stay-at-home crow families. Since, to maintain body weight, an adult bird consumes about 11 ounces of food a day, a roost site must be exceptionally rich in crow resources. For example, in addition to whatever the resident local birds require, 100,000 transient crows working out of a single roost need to find up to 30 tons of foodstuffs each day.

In the winter of 1991, along with some other members of the Crow Society, I visited a large roost located within the city limits of Wichita, Kansas. In the party was Dwight Platt, a professor of biology at Bethel College in Newton, Kansas. As a graduate student at the University of Kansas in the 1950s, Platt conducted an ecological study of crows in the south-central part of the state. He thinks that the most striking change that has occurred in roosting and other behaviors of crows during the past 40 years is the extent to which their activities have shifted from rural areas, where he studied them, to urban ones such as Wichita.

This phenomenon has been widely noted elsewhere. Five of the nine Middle Atlantic roosts our group regularly watches are located in the midst of the Baltimore-Washington metropolis; the other four are in or near smaller cities. At seven of these nine sites, crows roost in undeveloped tracts directly adjacent to shopping centers. The only plausible explanation is that many crows have moved to the cities and suburbs for about the same reason many people have—to make easier and better livings.

Urban areas provide crows with a couple of amenities that are not al-

Brazen fish crow makes itself uninvited guest at a picnic for people in Florida.

Alaska fisherman Mike McBride feeds pet crow the catch of the day—a mussel.

ways available out in the countryside: abundant food supplies, for one; security, for another. A movable feast of vegetable and animal matter copiously spills from garbage cans, dumpsters and loading docks, and is regularly scattered over streets, parking lots and public commons. And, whereas sports are often drawn to rural roosting sites to have at crows with rifles and shotguns, in urban areas a crow may be winged as people shoot at each other, but the birds are only accidental (and illegal) targets. Also, urban roosts are illuminated by streetlamps and electrified advertising displays, which make it more difficult for owls, raccoons, people or other would-be crow molesters to approach them undetected.

So far as natural features are concerned, roosts are usually located in places that are quite similar botanically. At a typical site there may be a small grove of tall mature trees—oaks, ashes, tulip poplars, cottonwoods, conifers—that rise above a thickety understory composed of such things as stunted locust, box elder, sumac, osage orange, vines and briars. These copses generally stand apart from extensive woodlands and are surrounded by open spaces covered by low brush, grass or, very often now, cement. As they begin to gather in late afternoon, the flocks first settle into the treetops. As darkness descends, so do the crows, dropping

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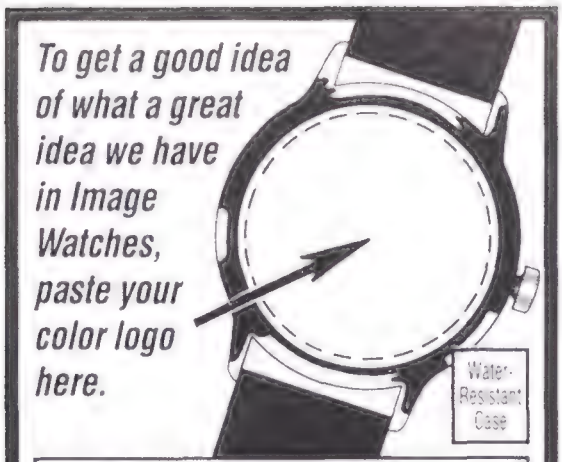

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down into the underbrush, crowding closer and closer together. Once they have finished shifting about, they will spend the night, 50,000 or so crows to the acre, perched 10 to 20 feet above the ground.

While crow roosts may seem virtually identical to us, they clearly are not to crows. Having selected a particular location, the birds will travel considerable distances each day to use it, flying over dozens of apparently equally suitable sites. No doubt minute differences in the flora, terrain, light, temperature and wind, and perhaps subtle social factors, make one site more appealing than another. Whatever the attractions, they are sufficient to keep crows returning year after year. According to Arthur Cleveland Bent, the great compiler of ornithological lore, there were in 1886 some 150,000 crows roosted along the Potomac in the northwestern outskirts of Washington, D.C. Today three large roosts are each located within four miles of the one mentioned by Bent. Longtime residents of Frederick and Hagerstown, Maryland, and of Carlisle, Littlestown and Milton, Pennsylvania, say there have been large roosts in their vicinities for 50 years or more. One roost we know of in Hagerstown has been used for eight consecutive seasons.

Periodically, however, a roost site will be abandoned by all birds and a new one established. Near Carlisle, crows have used three different roosts during the past four years. When such moves occur, they are usually made in the early fall. As crows begin to arrive, they ignore the place they have roosted the year before and select another nearby. Since such relocations are usually very slight in terms of distance, they do not require the flocks to change their daytime foraging territories. Therefore it seems unlikely they are made for economic reasons, but health may be a consideration. A rank mulch of crow dung, feathers and corpse parts rapidly builds up at a roost site. After a time parasites and disease-bearing organisms may become excessive in this litter. Perhaps crows

Residents of Greer County, Oklahoma, viewed grisly remains after state officials dynamited a big roost. Such tactics were not uncommon in the 1930s.

more or less simultaneously become aware of this and move to a more sanitary base.

Once some thousands of crows have settled on a roost in the fall, they rarely will or can be forced to leave it until the following spring. Their persistence in this regard is illustrated by events that occurred at the last truly rural roost our group watched. It was in the upper valley of the Monocacy River in south-central Pennsylvania. According to local residents, there have been crow roosts in this drainage system since at least the 1930s, but the locations have changed frequently. What happened in the winter of 1988-89 suggests why this has been the case. That fall about 20,000 crows formed a roost in a brushy ravine that is surrounded by hay, corn and soybean fields. On winter weekends it was regularly visited by recreational gunners. By Monday morning there were usually a hundred or so dead or dying crows in the bushes or on the ground. Nevertheless, the birds continued to congregate at this site until mid-March when, in keeping with their natural activity cycle, they migrated elsewhere.

In the fall of 1989 no crows, so far as we observed, returned even temporarily or experimentally to this ravine. But a new roost site was occupied about two miles away on an undeveloped tract in the factory district of Littlestown, Pennsylvania, where recreational shooting is prohibited. All of which leads to the presumption that some of these birds were survivors of the rural roost that had been used the previous winter; that some or all of them may have reflected on and responded to their experiences there; that some sort of memory, decision making and perhaps communication were involved. Improbable and anthropomorphic this speculation may be, but is it any harder to believe than attributing these happenings to pure coincidence?

All of which leads to an obvious question: If those crows were so smart,

Nestlings clamor for food. Parents and helpers bring it at least 20 times a day.

how come they initially refused to abandon their previous roost despite the fact that they were being blasted to smithereens? About the best that can be said is that this illustrates how imperfectly we understand what their self-interests are.

Recently many residents of Yuba City, California, have become well acquainted with what might be called the roosting drive of crows. This is a community of 18,000 people located 50 miles north of Sacramento in a fertile agricultural district that has historically attracted many wintering crows. In the fall of 1989 a large flock —probably well in excess of 100,000 birds—began spending the night on the outskirts of town, adjacent to a prune-processing plant. That winter, wildlife control agents commenced poisoning the crows but then had to stop, mainly because of protests from animal-rights groups. In the spring, after the crows had departed, a commercial walnut grove where they roosted was cut down. When the crows returned to the area, they moved into Yuba City proper, roosting in the ornamental trees and shrubbery of a residential neighborhood. In response to complaints, municipal authorities said in effect that there was no safe, cheap, effective or legal way to get rid of them.

Crow roosts are indisputably messy and odoriferous. When I toured the one in Yuba City, all of the people I talked to who lived nearby wished it were elsewhere. But they were not so

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violently anti-crow as I had thought they might be. Early one morning I met a man who, having removed the protective plastic covering from his car, was hosing down his driveway, which was whitewashed with crow droppings. He said: "You can't blame the birds. After the walnut grove was cut down they had to find a new place that suited them and this was it."

A surprising number of comments in the same general vein set me to thinking about how things have changed with and between crows and people. In 1940 agents of the state conservation commission rigged a big roost in a rural area near Rockford, Illinois, with clusters of dynamite sticks. When the dynamite was detonated, 328,000 crows were killed. This may have been the largest such massacre—it was big enough to rate a photograph in *Life* magazine—but commonly then, and for many previous decades, roosting crows were blown up, shot and poisoned by the thousands. Such pogroms no longer occur, at least legally. This reflects the fact that zoological ethics have changed considerably in the past 50 years and that crows are now federally classified as migratory birds. Like ducks, they may still be killed but only as specified by state game regulations, not indiscriminately as was the case in the past. There is also a practical consideration: crows have become so urbanized that it is difficult to blast their communities without doing considerable damage to our own.

The roost I know best is one of

Messy table in Maryland park shows why crow roosts aren't always welcome.

Heading back to the roost for the evening, a flock of crows alights on a wintry cornfield for a raucous "happy hour" of socializing and foraging.

some 75,000 crows in Hagerstown. It is situated in bermside scrub along a boulevard that separates a municipal park from a large shopping center. Rising above the thickets is a knoll, now paved as a parking lot, which makes an especially good vantage point from which the birds can be observed closely without, it seems, greatly disturbing them.

Even after full darkness has fallen, there are flurries of activities within the dense mass of birds as they shift positions and jostle one another. Also, throughout the night there is a continuing chorus of chirps, clucks and odd mewing sounds that are much softer and more musical than daytime crow vocalizations. As morning approaches, the birds become more restless and the volume of noise increases, reaching a crescendo, a sort of strident, screeching hum, about an hour before sunup. Then there is a sharp explosive crack as the first few thousand birds simultaneously rise from the roost and fly off toward feeding grounds. The departure is staggered as separate flocks move out at about five-minute intervals, the last taking off about an hour or so after the first.

As the streams of birds fan out from the roost, small sub-flocks begin dropping off and settling down on the ground to feed. However, some we have been able to keep track of will continue for 20 miles or more before landing. The appearance certainly is that predetermination is involved—i.e., when they leave, the individuals are intent on reaching particular foraging areas. By midmorning crows from the Hagerstown roost are scattered across some 300,000 acres.

In early afternoon they begin the return trip, which is more leisurely than the morning flight. A group feeding on the periphery of the foraging territory will fly a few miles toward the center of it, halt in a field and be joined there by one or more bands. The combined parties will mill around a bit on the ground, seemingly doing more socializing than feeding; then they move on to another field or woodlot, a bit closer to the roost, where they will meet more incoming groups. These assembly points are called staging areas, and the birds may make use of a half-dozen of them, with the size of the flocks increasing at each stop.

Eventually thousands of crows literally blacken the ground of the last

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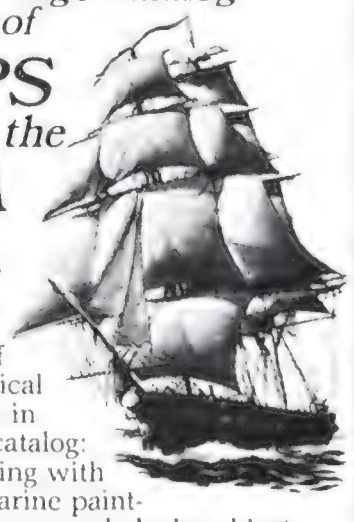

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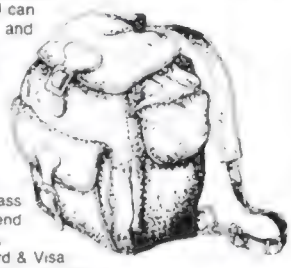

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staging areas. These are located a half-mile or less from the roost, invariably in clearings. From them, the birds pour directly into thickets where they will spend the night.

Tens of thousands of crows converging on a single small site is, to me, among the most impressive of zoological spectacles. This is particularly true at Hagerstown, where the birds stream in so low over the knoll that there is a sense of being in the midst of an avian maelstrom. I often take people with me to watch the crows coming home to roost. A very common response of first-time observers is something to the effect, "My God, it is like a scene out of *The Birds*, that Hitchcock movie."

There are several conventional theories as to why crows roost together during the winter:

- Perched in compact groups, they warm and insulate one another.
- It is virtually impossible for anything to approach a roostful of crows without being detected by some individuals who warn the others.
- Winter roosts may promote genetic diversity, functioning somewhat as singles bars, providing opportunities for members of opposite sexes to become acquainted.
- Congregating daily in the same place is, in effect, a share-the-wealth adaptation. In the fall and winter, food resources are less evenly distributed than they are in the spring and summer. Having located rich foraging areas, smarter, bolder or luckier crows are subsequently followed to them by their roostmates.

There are no grounds for disputing either the notion that habits originate because they have survival value or the premise that crows roost together for some or all of the above reasons. Yet, since many of them survive and apparently prosper without doing so, roosting is clearly not imperative for crows as, say, hibernating is for woodchucks. Furthermore, crows that do roost gather in groups that vary in size from a few hundred to millions.

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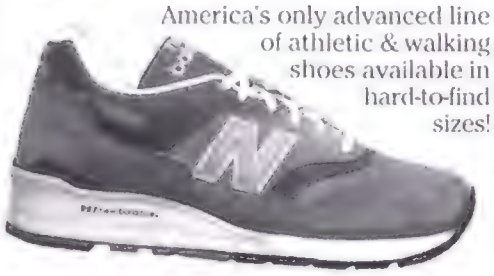

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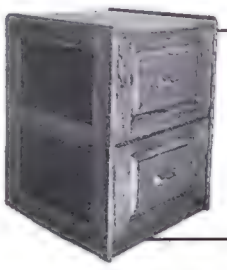

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Since there is no evidence that benefits for individuals continue to increase with size of flock, it is puzzling why gathering in such extraordinary numbers is advantageous. In terms of time and energy spent commuting, it would seem that 100 roosts of 5,000 birds each would be more efficient than a single one of 500,000.

This strongly suggests that crows have complex systems of needs, some of which may be more psychic than material. It is conceivable that in addition to seeking warmth, safety and such, crows also roost simply for the sake of roosting. Doing so perhaps enhances their sense of well-being, providing satisfactions that they have come to value greatly.

In these regards my own thoughts were considerably altered and expanded when a Bengali friend named Krishna Roy visited the Hagerstown roost with me. She was suitably awed and listened patiently as I expounded on the accepted ornithological assumptions about roosting. After I finished she said, "But of course, it also appears they come here to give *adda*." Then she explained the expression.

At predetermined times and at regular intervals, Bengali men and women meet and talk with congenial companions. This is always described as giving—never as having or taking—*adda*. "When giving *adda* we talk a great deal, often all at the same time. The attraction is hearing, seeing, being in touch with each other. I expect the point is that it has no point except being together. Giving *adda*, I should think, would not make sense to many Americans but perhaps it does for your crows."

Robust adult perches on an apricot tree in full bloom. Crows are social creatures, and a lone bird like this one will seek out the company of others.

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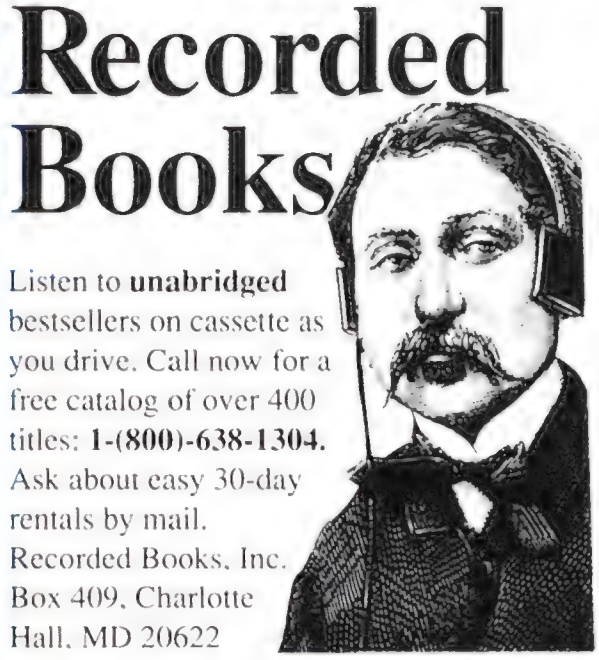
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1914

In one of the earliest known safety tests, John Dodge takes two of the first automobiles bearing his name and drives them straight into a brick wall at nearly 20 miles per hour. When a startled employee asks why, Dodge says, "I might as well, because someone else is going to do it when these cars get on the road."

Dodge's first safety test for tires is rather unscientific. He throws them off the top of a four-story building.

1931

Chrysler introduces Floating Power, a refinement of its earlier enclosed rubber engine mount idea. (Incidentally, Floating Power was so popular that it was licensed to other carmakers.)

1936

In a dramatic demonstration of the structural integrity of the 1936 Dodge, W.E. Blandenburg straps himself in the car and rolls it down a steep embankment. Incredibly, the car lands right side up. Even more incredibly, Blandenburg gets out, smiles for the cameras, gets back in, and drives away.

1937

Good news for backseat drivers: Chrysler introduces the first safety padding on the back of front seats.

1941-45

Chrysler spends the war years building tanks and bombers. Vehicles that were decidedly unsafe for the competition

POSSIBLY THE ONLY TIME ANYBODY GOT AHEAD BY PLAYING IT SAFE.

1923

Dodge introduces the first all-steel closed car body in the U.S. (Quite a bit safer than the wood-framed car bodies that preceded it.)

1924

The first four-wheel hydraulic brakes on a U.S. production car appear on the first Chrysler. Fifteen years later, all U.S. cars have hydraulic brakes.

1926

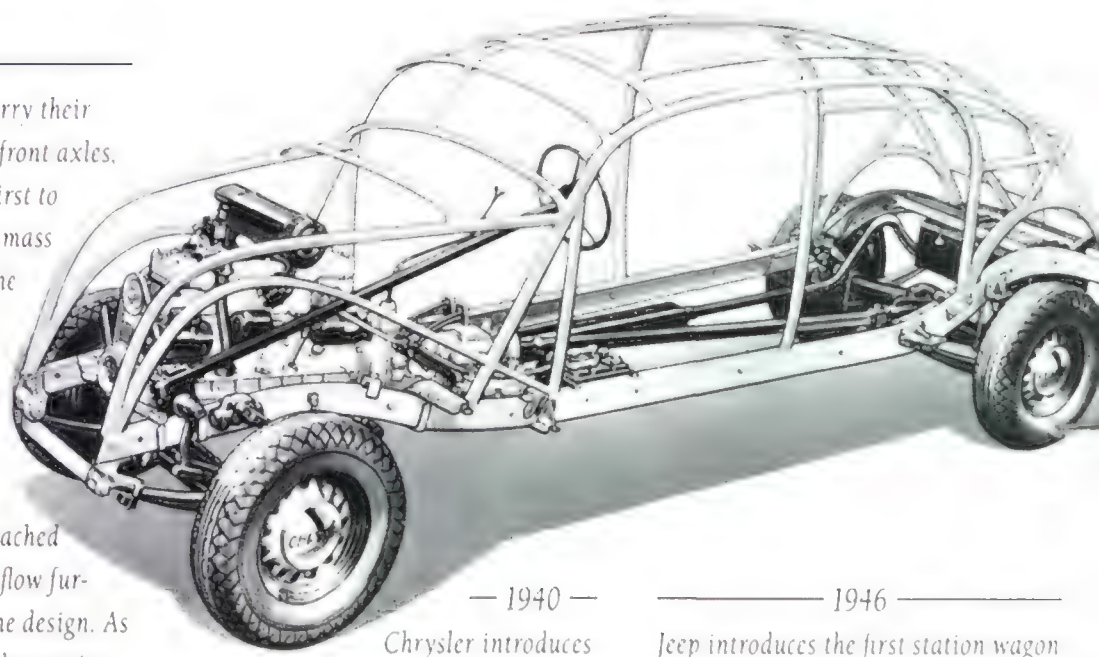
Chrysler introduces the first enclosed rubber engine mounts. Before that, vibration would shake up even the sturdiest of drivers.

1934

In an era when all cars carry their engines well behind their front axles, Chrysler's Airflow is the first to place a third of its engine mass ahead of the front axle. The result is better weight distribution, safer handling and shameless imitation by other carmakers.

With its all-steel body attached to a steel skeleton, the Airflow further refines the art of frame design. As the first car body to provide a majority of the car's strength, it paves the way for modern unit-body construction.

In another industry first, the spring rates of the Airflow are synchronized to reduce pitching and improve control during acceleration and sudden stops.



1940

Chrysler introduces the first twin leading shoe brakes, improving stopping power and the chances of avoiding an accident.

1941

Before Chrysler devises the Safety Rim wheel, a blowout would often cause the tire to separate from the wheel, forcing the hapless driver to stop his car on steel rims.

1946

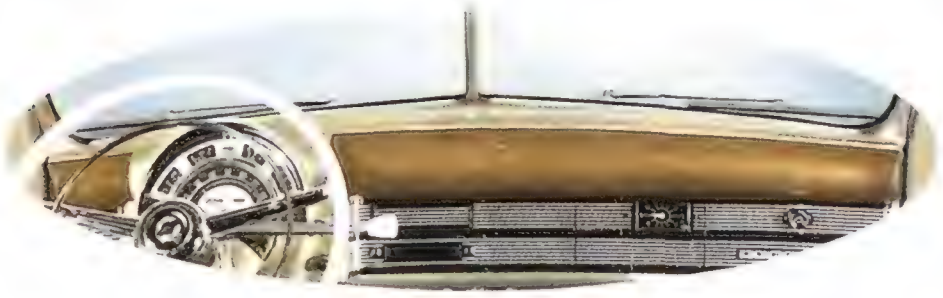
Jeep introduces the first station wagon to use an all-steel body. Which makes traveling safer for kids, dogs, and bags of groceries

1949

Before Splash-Proof ignition was introduced by Chrysler, a little water could stop a 4,000-pound car. Clearly not the safest way to travel on a busy highway

1949

Realizing that the dashboard isn't exactly the best place for exposed metal that won't give in an accident, Chrysler creates the first padded dashboard



1950

Chrysler introduces the first four-wheel, self-energizing disc brakes.

1951

Chrysler designs the first forced air-cooled brakes, because overheated brakes aren't reliable

1959

The first automatic dimming electronic rear-view mirror reduces headlight glare

1960

Chrysler becomes the first to offer high-beam dimmers that automatically switch headlamps to low beam when an oncoming vehicle is detected

1963

The first airfoil wiper arms keep the blades pressed firmly against the windshield at high speeds

1966

Firm in the belief that seat belts can be made even safer, Chrysler offers the first shoulder harness

Chrysler introduces the first separate, self-contained rear heater-defroster system. (Even when Chrysler engineers are looking backward, they're still looking forward.)

1968

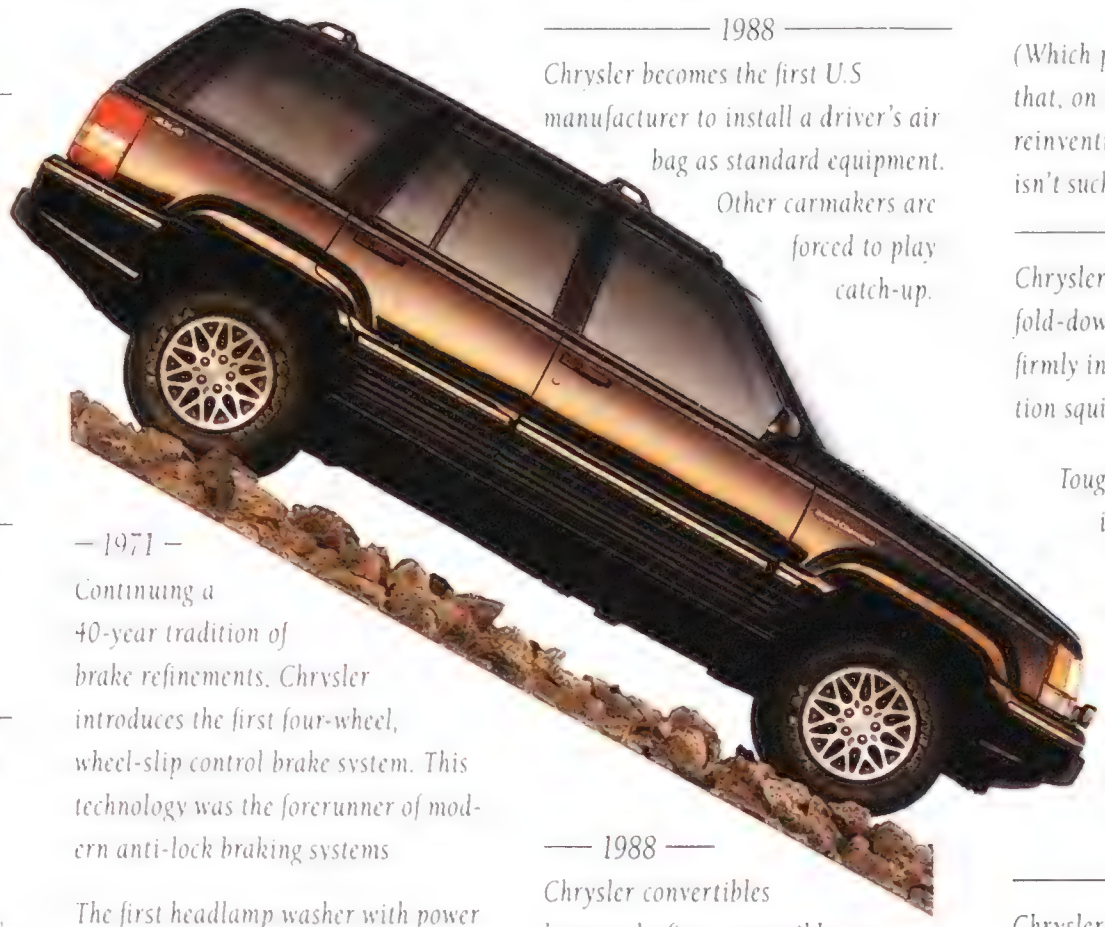
Chrysler creates the first rear-window washer system. It gives Chrysler owners greater visibility of what's behind them. And it gives Chrysler engineers greater visibility as creators of safe vehicles

1969

The first quartz-halogen driving light greatly increases nighttime driving safety. Years later, other car companies see the light and introduce their own quartz-halogen lights.

1971

Why did Chrysler engineer the first automatic tailgate locking system? Because a station wagon full of screaming kids can cause you to lose your mind. And your memory.



1971

Continuing a 40-year tradition of brake refinements, Chrysler introduces the first four-wheel, wheel-slip control brake system. This technology was the forerunner of modern anti-lock braking systems

The first headlamp washer with power brush does for headlamps what windshield wipers do for windshields.

1972

One of the most-ignored rules of safe car repair is Always disconnect the battery first. Chrysler makes it easier than ever for mechanics with the first battery quick-disconnect feature

1973

Jeep introduces the first U.S. vehicle to offer full-time four-wheel drive. After all, why should improved traction and handling be a part-time affair?

1979

Realizing the inherent problems of bias-ply tires (hydroplaning and punctures), Chrysler becomes the first to make radial tires standard on all its cars.

1987

Condensation in the exhaust system leads to corrosion. And corroded exhaust pipes can leak toxic fumes Chrysler responds by being the first carmaker to install corrosion-resistant stainless steel exhaust systems on every car it builds

1988

Chrysler becomes the first U.S manufacturer to install a driver's air bag as standard equipment. Other carmakers are forced to play catch-up.

1988

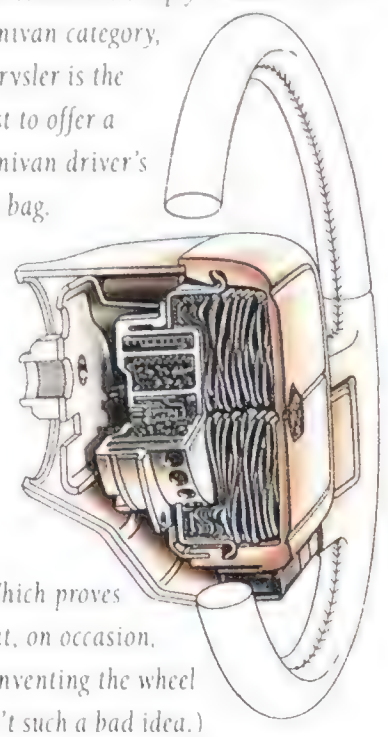
Chrysler convertibles become the first convertibles to offer driver's air bags as standard equipment. A little extra air couldn't hurt, could it?

1989

Chrysler offers the first four-wheel antilock brakes on a four-wheel drive vehicle. Ranchers, surfers and urban cowboys, rejoice!

1991

Not content to simply create the entire minivan category, Chrysler is the first to offer a minivan driver's air bag.



(Which proves that, on occasion, reinventing the wheel isn't such a bad idea.)

1992

Chrysler creates the first built-in, fold-down child seat. It keeps children firmly in their seats, and our competition squirming in theirs

Tough off-road conditions could inadvertently deploy an air bag. Chrysler responds by deploying its engineers The result? The Jeep Grand Cherokee, which is the only sport-utility vehicle with a standard driver's air bag

1993

Chrysler draws on 79 years of safety innovation to create the first car to combine standard dual air bags and anti-lock brakes with options like traction control and a built-in fold-down child seat

At a time when it has become fashionable for car companies to hop on the safety bandwagon, we thought you'd like to know who built the bandwagon. And when it was built. In the car business, you lead, follow or get out of the way.

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Book reviews

Jagendorf's Foundry
Siegfried Jagendorf
HarperCollins, $22.95

Escape Through the Pyrenees
Lisa Fittko
Northwestern University Press, $24.95/$12.95 paper

The holocaust of the Jews of Europe during World War II continues to call forth its witnesses, 50 years on. This pair of books presents the ordeals of two remarkable people who were both victims and survivors. In human terms, tragedy surrounded them, but because of their willpower, their intelligence and their personalities, they not only endured adversity of the most harrowing sort but triumphed over it.

No challenge seemed too great for Siegfried Jagendorf, a highly educated and worldly Romanian Jew who had been a leading engineer in the great Siemens electrical complex in Vienna. He had served in the Austro-Hungarian Army in World War I and had apparently total self-confidence. He, his wife and thousands of other Romanian Jews were transported to what was called Transnistria, a large tract of western Ukraine beyond the Dniester River reserved for Jewish deportees.

Jews in Romania were beset on all sides: by the local police of Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu; by the Germans invading, and later retreating from, the USSR; by Russian "liberators" who freed them from the Germans and rearrested them; and by the Ukrainian camp followers who robbed them. Jagendorf concentrated on one question: "Who was our enemy? . . . The enemy was death itself, and our only business survival."

He was one of those born leaders whose aplomb baffled bureaucratic authority no matter how hostile. Jagendorf was deposited in the late autumn of 1941 at the border town of Moghilev, a city supposedly closed to Jews. Noticing that its industry and utilities were in ruins, he offered to restore power with the help of a crew of fellow prisoners.

The scheme was pronounced impossible and against all regulations. Yet Jagendorf persisted and succeeded. He moved his workers into a huge abandoned foundry, the "Turnatoria," and began to manufacture everything from cigarette lighters to machinery for sugar factories and tractor piston rings. Because his ideas worked, Jagendorf managed to save his Jewish production teams —and thousands of their "relatives"— from the concentration camps.

This book is Jagendorf's memoir, written once he had arrived safely in California, and discovered years after his death in 1970. Aron Hirt-Manheim, of the Holocaust Library publishing house in New York, edited and wrote commentary for the manuscript. Jagendorf's account exudes the confidence he had in his own authority: for him, and for those dependent on him, no other attitude was possible. Of course he was domineering and arrogant. But his triumph over the bureaucracy of tyranny showed his value to the Jews of Romania during one of the worst periods of their long history.

Far to the west Lisa Fittko was fighting her own battle against another savage bureaucracy, Nazi and Vichy France. Political refugees from Berlin in the 1930s, she and her family found themselves in Paris when France fell in the spring of 1940.

Fittko was taken to a camp in southern France. In the wartime confusion, she and about 60 other women simply walked away—free but stateless, homeless and penniless. She had that fatal characteristic of the 20th-century refugee: she had no identity and could claim none. Not officially existing, she could call on no one for recognition, much less succor.

Her story, pieced together from diaries and her own and others' memories, portrays her as a formidable fighter. She too bent the bureaucracy to her will, not with the flamboyance of a Jagendorf but with a patient and unrelenting intelligence. "Everything must be tried" was her watchword. Whether it was obtaining a phantom visa, conniving with the

Swedish consulate in Marseilles or successfully evoking the latent patriotism of a Vichy railroad officer, she was cool under stress.

The most dramatic achievement of the period, which lasted until she and her husband arrived in Cuba in 1942, was an underground railroad for refugees fleeing France for Spain or Portugal. They established a clandestine route over the Pyrenees along the Mediterranean coast, escorting dozens of people to safety.

Like Siegfried Jagendorf, Lisa Fittko (who finally made it to safety in Chicago) had no room for self-pity. Their campaigns against terror were pure struggles; these accounts, even allowing for the retouching of memory, are pure too.

Nicholas King is a writer and critic who lives and works in New York.

Acadian Hard Times
C. Stewart Doty
Photographs by John Collier jr.,
Jack Delano and Jack Walas
University of Maine Press,
$45/$24.95 paper

Half a century after they were made, Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographs of life in the Great Depression remain a compelling vehicle for reflection on the American character. Taken by a legendary group of photographers that included Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Carl Mydans and Gordon Parks (SMITHSONIAN, April 1989), those photographs—Lange's shots of migratory laborers out West, for example, or Evans' portraits of Southern sharecroppers—formed our national memory of that economic cataclysm.

This volume provides a contemporaneous view of another, less looked-at region—the St. John Valley of Maine, hard by the New Brunswick border. Its residents, largely French-speaking descendants of Acadians expelled by the British in 1755 from maritime Canada, had survived by potato farming, seasonal lumbering and mill work, until crop prices collapsed and mills closed.

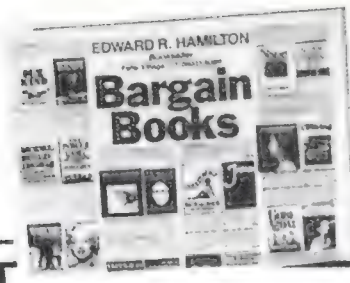
The FSA stepped in to provide the rural aid that bankrupt towns and the overwhelmed state government could not. French and Catholic traditions, unlike classic Down East attitudes that recoiled from public assistance, welcomed community and government help. The St. John Valley thus received a battery of federal aid, from operating loans and advice on farm and home management to medical and dental visits.

Early in the 1940s, the agency sent two of its outstanding photographers, Jack Delano and John Collier jr., to record conditions there. Already harassed by New Deal opponents, the FSA team felt constrained to stick close to its legislative mission—to document rural hardship and the effectiveness of aid programs. "Emphasize the idea of abundance—the 'horn of plenty' and pour maple syrup over it," Roy Stryker, chief of the photography unit, advised.

But along the way, Stryker, an economist who brilliantly understood the power and uses of photographs, made sure his crew also compiled a pictorial encyclopedia of American agriculture. "Keep your eyes open for a rag doll and a corn tester," he routinely reminded them. And the photographers in turn focused sympathetically on typical Acadian life of that day, strongly similar to the style of a century earlier but soon to change irrevocably.

Delano and Collier found farmhouses with a single room on each of two floors. Farmers planted and harvested potatoes and put up hay by hand (though shiny FSA-financed tractors are in evidence at some farms). The women spun, knitted and wove wool; sewed; hooked rugs; made their own soap; and churned butter for sale. Only one photograph shows children at play, and it, Collier noted, was posed; the

A child pumps water, 1942, in an FSA photographer's image of Maine farm life.



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young are shown, instead, cleaning house, weeding, feeding livestock, pumping water and raking. Yet their tables held abundant food, including plates full of *ployes*, the Acadian buckwheat pancakes cooked on only one side, meat and canned wild blueberries.

Acadians who lived through that time confirm they worked ceaselessly but did not go hungry. Historian C. Stewart Doty located and interviewed 100 of them, from 15 families pictured in the book, to find out what happened to them. His lucid text summarizes the impact FSA had in the St. John Valley, both in the estimable help it gave people in crisis and its failure to stem the boom-and-bust cycle of potato prices. The county now has only one-tenth the number of potato farms it had in 1930. Many people helped by the FSA later moved to lower New England to work; some stayed, a few even in farming.

A current photo essay by Jack Walas portrays the same land and many of the people photographed five decades ago. Their poverty was not intractable, and many retain the plain but affable nature so evident earlier. Main Street in Fort Kent would be instantly recognizable to a resident of the '40s, but much of the land then under intensive small-scale cultivation has returned to brush. That gives the St. John Valley a certain wildness it did not have when Delano and Collier visited.

Daniel Cohen, photographer and writer, lives in Hoboken, New Jersey.

The Lady and The Monk:
Four Seasons In Kyoto
Pico Iyer
Alfred A. Knopf, $22/Vintage Press, $12 paper (available in November)

When Pico Iyer set out for Japan in the late 1980s, he craved solitude and anonymity. "A life alone was the closest thing to faith I knew," he writes in this eloquent memoir of a year's sojourn in Kyoto, city of "hooded temples and dark castles." Iyer, a writer for *Time* magazine, was not surprised by the brassy modern style that jarred against the older, subtler culture that he wished to ferret out. Japan, "it sometimes seemed, came on like a hostess—sleekly appareled, full of automatic charm," and so intolerant of unhappiness that young Japanese were blind to the despair that is the daily lot of much of the outer world. Nevertheless, his portrait of this people who "had been trained always to see the good, and to expect the same in others" is a deeply sympathetic one.

Iyer was initially attracted by the spareness of Zen Buddhism, and his narrative humorously recounts the struggles of several Western would-be monks to cope with the rigors of monastic life. But curiosity soon lured Iyer past Zen's minimalism toward the more intimate realms of a culture that demands a daunting degree of self-denial even in private life. Surprisingly, he fails to bring his formidable intellect to bear on Japanese men, dismissing them as mere "salarymen," and apparently accepting the view of writer Tsushima Yukio, in whose stories men are "not so much members of a household as sightseers there."

He finds the women more appealing. "Everywhere one looked in Japan, one saw an identical sorrow: so many women with so much to give, and so little occasion to use it." Iyer's avenue into Japanese emotional life takes the form of Sachiko, "a seamlessly elegant Japanese lady" of 30, who buttonholes him in the midst of a solemn temple ritual, happily confessing to a passion for Bruce Springsteen. Before long, Iyer recognizes that he has become for Sachiko a symbol of an uninhibitedly "foreign" way of life. He feels as if he were "auditioning to play the part of a freewheeling foreigner in the long-running romantic picture she'd been screening in her mind." Sachiko explains, "You are from other world. I want see and learn this other world. But I cannot join. My heart very tiny—little fragile."

In his encounters with Japanese women, Iyer taps the aquifer of pain that he believes floods beneath Japan's dynamic economic landscape. The encounters reveal as well an apparently bottomless capacity for grace that redeems even the most tawdry impulses of the contemporary Japanese spirit.

There is a moment of great poignancy as Iyer's departure from Japan approaches. Sachiko presents him with some chocolates. "Little cartoon eating food," she announces, and begins singing Popeye's theme song. Later, Iyer discovers that the real gift was the green pouch in which the chocolates came. The Japanese word for "spinach" is a homonym of "secret love." For centuries "giving someone a present wrapped in a bag of spinach-green had been the most eloquent way of giving him one's heart."
Fergus M. Bordewich wrote *Cathay: A Journey In Search Of Old China.*

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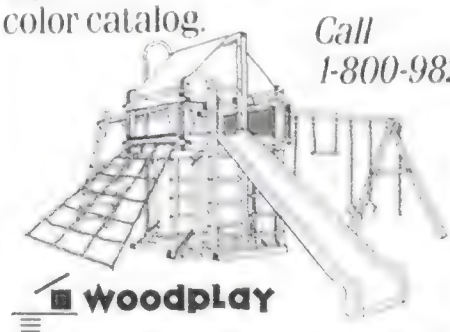

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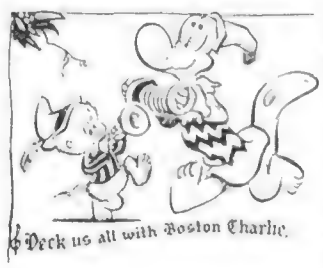

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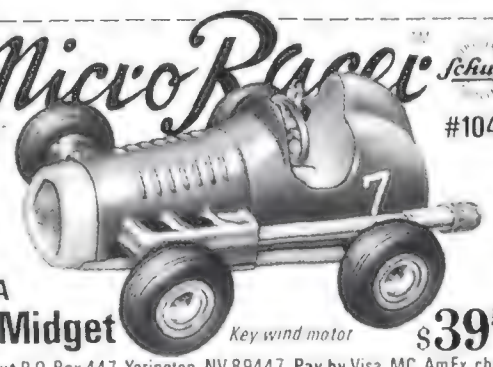

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National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of American History and National Museum of Natural History operate on extended summer hours, from 9:30 A.M. to 7:30 P.M. daily, through Labor Day.

Freer Gallery of Art reopens May 9, 1993

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Special August exhibits and events

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Crosscurrents of Modernism: Four Latin American Pioneers (through September 7) See *Highlights continued*, page 121.
Directions—Thomas Struth: Museum Photographs (through August 16) Works document interplay between viewer and masterworks in European art museums.

National Air and Space Museum
Star Trek (through January 31, 1993) Show marks 25th anniversary of famed television series. Passes required daily; call (202) 786-2122 for details.
Legend, Memory and the Great War in the Air Permanent installation looks at reality of aviation in World War I.
Antarctica (7:30 P.M. daily through September 7) New Imax film explores the world's southernmost continent.

National Museum of American History
Fringe of the Diaspora: The Jews of Wyoming (August 4-October 25) Photo essay by Penny Wolin documents experience of Jewish community in Wyoming.
Behind Bars (August 4-October 25) Photographs by Grace L. Wojda; prison life at the Lebanon Correctional Institution.
Elephant Ivory: Tarnished Treasure (August 4-January 10, 1993) Exhibit explores history of ivory trade and its consequences on world's elephant population.
American Encounters Permanent Quincentenary exhibition focuses on the three cultures—American Indian, Hispanic and Anglo American—of New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande Valley.

National Museum of Natural History
Seeds of Change (through May 23, 1993) Exhibit explores the dramatic changes begun 500 years ago with the exchange of five "seeds" between the Old World and the New.
Peoples of the Luzon Mountains: Philippine Photographs by Eduardo Masferré (through September 7) Images from 1934-56 of unique peoples of these highlands.

National Museum of African Art
Recent Acquisitions/New Dimensions (through January 3, 1993) Works by nine modern artists from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Kenya.
Between Man and the Gods: Sacrifice and Ceremony on a Cast Metal Ring (through September 7) Rare, centuries-old cast metal ring from the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Ancient Japan (August 9-November 1) Objects in stone, clay, wood, bone, lacquer, bronze, gold, present evolution of early Japanese culture from 200,000 B.C. through seventh century.
When Kingship Descended from Heaven: Masterpieces of Mesopotamian Art from the Louvre (through August 9) Loan exhibition presents some of the most celebrated works of art, created between 3500 and 2000 B.C. in kingdoms of Sumer and Akkad, Southern Mesopotamia (now Iraq).

National Portrait Gallery
Noble Heritage: Five Centuries of Portraits from the Hosokawa Family (through November 29) Portraits, from 14th to 19th centuries, of members of this prominent Japanese family.
Recent Acquisitions (through December 14) Portraits of notable Americans.
Arnold Newman's Americans (through August 16) Images of major personalities by the noted photographer.

National Museum of American Art
Ralph Eugene Meatyard: An American Visionary (through October 18) Unconventional, expressionistic images make familiar subjects seem remarkable.
Helen Levitt: A Retrospective Exhibition (through October 18) Works by a master of 20th-century American photography.

Renwick Gallery
Drawings by Craft Artists (through March 21, 1993) Preliminary plans for 3-D objects by six craftsmen show unique graphic perspective.

Anacostia Museum
To Achieve These Rights: The Struggle for Equality and Self-Determination in the District of Columbia, 1791-1978 (through September 30) Examines the struggle to secure equal rights.

Arts and Industries Building Experimental Gallery
Psychology: Understanding Ourselves, Understanding Each Other (through September 9) Hands-on exhibition helps children and adults explore their own psychological processes.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
The Cooper-Hewitt Collections: A Design Resource (through August 30) Some 1,200 objects chronicle history of this important repository of design.

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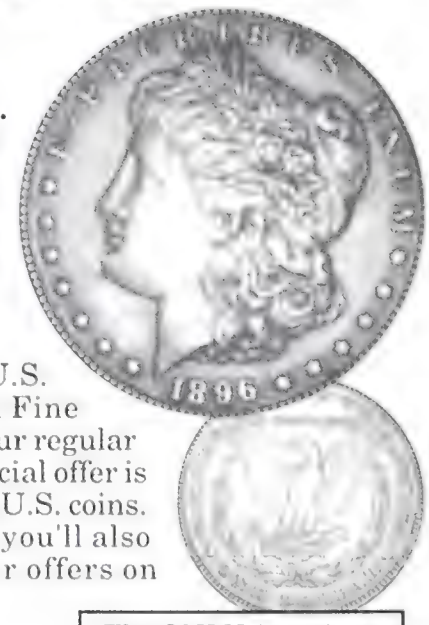

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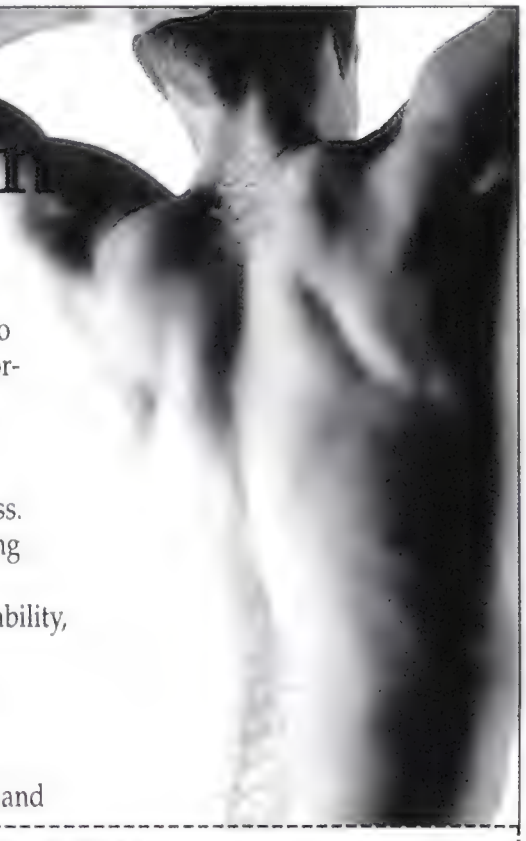

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Black by Design: African American Haute Couture (August 12, 19, 26 and September 2, 9; 7 P.M.) Black perspectives on the fashion world.

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• Marietta, Georgia (August 15-September 27) *American Greek Revival Architecture*, Marietta-Cobb Museum of Art.
• Rochester, New York (August 15-September 20) *Italy: One Hundred Years of Photography*, George Eastman House.

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Highlights continued

Crosscurrents of Modernism

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is celebrating the vivid, energizing influence of New World culture on modern art with an exhibition of key works by four Latin American painters active during the first half of the 20th century. "Crosscurrents of Modernism: Four Latin American Pioneers," on view through September 7, showcases the achievements of artists Diego Rivera, Joaquín Torres-García, Wifredo Lam and Matta. Born in Mexico, Uruguay, Cuba and Chile, respectively, these artists created a unique vision by melding distinctively Latin American sources—pre-Columbian history and art, Afro-Caribbean religions, the primordial Andean landscape—with the ideas and styles they assimilated in Europe from the avant-garde, styles ranging from Cubism to the geometric abstraction of Neo-Plasticism to Surrealism.

"Studying in Europe during times of great artistic ferment, these artists absorbed some of the most radical theories and styles then current," says Valerie Fletcher, the show's curator. "Yet far from losing sight of their Latin American cultural backgrounds, they ultimately infused their work with themes, forms and sensations rooted in the Latin American experience. The result was that their art immeasurably advanced international modernism."
Diane M. Bolz

Rivera's 1915 Cubist *Zapatist Landscape (The Guerrilla)* (left) is abstract portrait of the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. In *Constructive Painting* (above), Torres-García uses nautical motifs, pre-Columbian-style ideograms.

Primal energy radiates from cosmic space of Matta's *Let's Phosphoresce by Intellection I*, 1950 (below). The masklike face of Wifredo Lam's *Woman in Violet*, circa 1938 (right), reveals influence of African sculpture.

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NEW **Atlantic Crossing** *October 18-November 5* Aboard the *Sea Cloud.*

Copper Canyon (Mexico) *October 23-30*

NEW **Japan Arts** *October 25-November 7*

Mexico Folk Art *October 27-November 8*

NEW **Borneo and Indonesia Cruise** *October 27-November 15*

London Interlude *October 29-November 7*

NEW **Hidden India** *October 29-November 22*

NEW **Columbus in the Caribbean** *November 4-14* Aboard the *Sea Cloud.*

Moscow and St. Petersburg *November 8-17*

Christmas in Winchester *December 17-28*

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The Island of Dominica *February 10-18*

Lapland Reindeer Safari *February 21-March 2*

Guatemala Adventure *February 23-March 8*

China-Japan Cruise *March 15-April 2* Aboard the *Royal Viking Queen.*

NEW **Central Mexico Archaeology** *March 17-29*

Nile Cruise *April 12-29*

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NEW **Maine: An Insider's View** *September 1-8*

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NEW **California's National Parks** *October 4-12*

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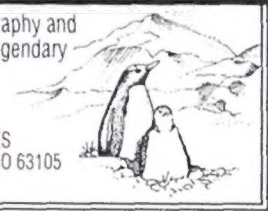

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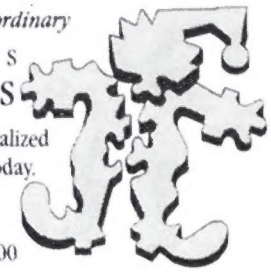

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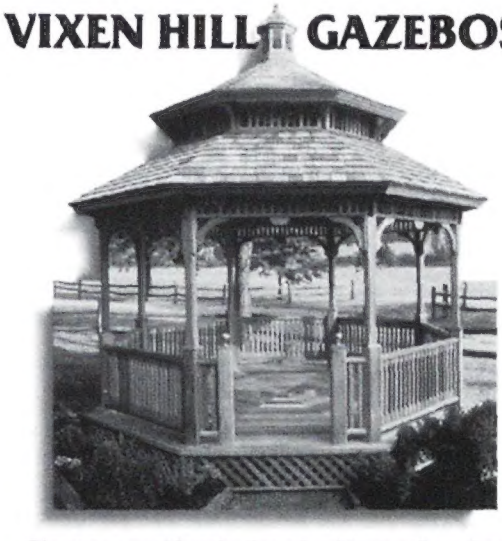

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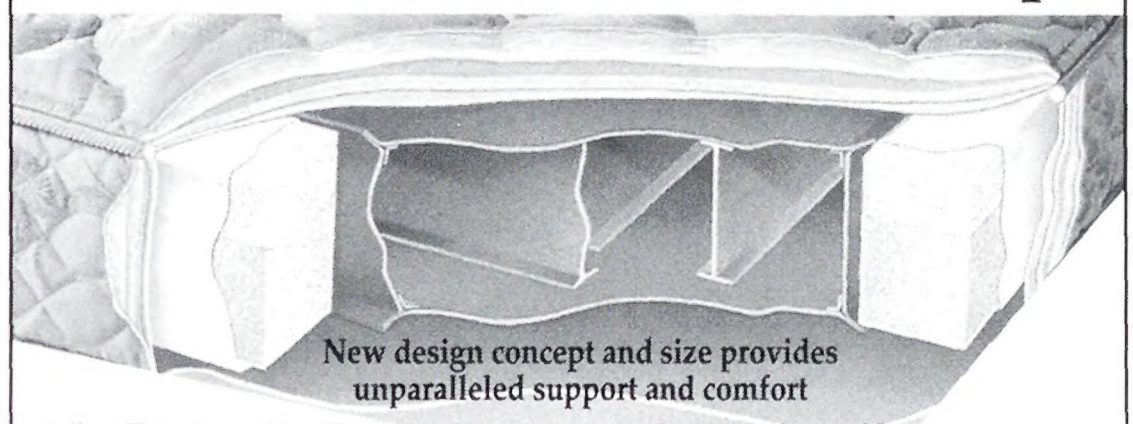

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By Michael Kernan

To have fun, take one tree and add house

I was at one of those animal farms where children can pet llamas and sheep and ducks and pigs and feel one with nature. The proprietor had built a two-story tree house with stairs, windows and probably air-conditioning for all I could tell.

One daddy muttered to him, "I admire your courage."

"How's that?" said the proprietor.

"Why, to have this out here for just anyone to climb on. Aren't you afraid you'll be sued?"

This is America, 1992. We have come far. I don't think either of those guys had the slightest notion of what a tree house is, or was.

There was a major dustup in Atherton, California, a while back when a neighbor sued because his backyard was overlooked by a tree house. I thought this person must be a nut until I read that the tree house had been designed by an architect and built by a contractor and had running water and electricity. That wasn't a tree house either.

Am I going to have to explain tree houses to you all?

My first one was in a maladjusted elm tree. Elms are not good for tree houses because they don't have handy lower branches. This one, however, had a freak branch just low enough for me to swing up onto it. It made a saddle with the main trunk, and there I sat, on an old pillow that I had stolen from the house and nailed into place. It was not a great tree house.

Then I discovered maples. I had a succession of maple tree houses from the front yard to the back forty (it helps to live in the country), including one with a natural well formed by a meeting of branches. The water in it was black and tasted terrible, but it was all right for military purposes. I made 200 water bombs to defend the tree house.

They were never used. Nobody ever invaded my tree. I suppose it was because they couldn't see me up there among the leaves.

My best house had an old shed door for a platform that I hauled across the pasture one hot afternoon and hoisted up on a rope. It was never quite level, but I could sit with my back to the tree and smoke my father's oval Regent cigarettes and read Dostoyevsky and mostly gaze out across the valley. My dog Napoleon (named for a cartoon character, not the emperor) waited below, groaning from time to time. I dropped him dog biscuits.

This tree was my home, my adventure. You had to swing up onto the lowest branch in a special way and then climb above the platform and drop down onto it. If a grown man had offered to build me one, with stairs, I would have considered him insane. At that time he probably would have been.

Once my cousin John and I arranged to meet by night at his home, a two-mile walk from my place, and then sneak off to John's own tree house. I was to bring some drinks and sandwiches of smoked trout pâté, which I had found hidden in the pantry.

At 2 in the morning I reached John's house, set on the campus of the local college. John was to tie a string to his big toe and let the string out the window of his bedroom. He had no confidence in alarm clocks.

Creeping up to the house, I found the string and yanked on it. The window opened and John's head popped out. "Be down when I can," he stage-whispered. So I retreated to some extremely anemic bushes by the front door and hunkered down to wait.

About this time John's dog Marcel realized that something was afoot and started to fuss. Pretty soon John's father escorted Marcel on his leash to the front porch, and both of them stood peering out into the darkness. Now, John's father was an English professor at the college, an austere person given to ironic comments, usually in a foreign language. I knew instinctively that he must not, under any circumstances, discover me squatting in his bushes at 2 o'clock in the morning with a bottle of root beer and two smoked trout pâté sandwiches.

He sniffed the night air, shrugged and turned to go back inside. But Marcel was bucking and yawing on his leash, so the professor unhooked him. With a yelp Marcel charged straight for my bush.

I should mention that Marcel was a standard poodle. If he had been a Doberman I would not be sitting here writing this piece. On the other hand, if he had been a Doberman I probably would not have come to John's house in the first place.

Anyway, Marcel jumped joyously on me, nosing in his dogly way at my pocket. I gave him one of the sandwiches. He adored it. I gave him the other one. He adored that too. I had been telling John how good this pâté was, stored secretly behind the Triscuits for some future adult tea party.

Finally I pushed Marcel away, and he returned to the professor.

John appeared a half-hour later, after things had calmed down.

Soon we were ensconced in his tree house in the nearby woods. It was made of a door like mine, more level but with no view. We started playing honeymoon bridge and swigging on the root beer.

"Thought you were bringing smoked trout pâté sandwiches," he said.

"I gave them to the dog," I said.

"Oh," he said.

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